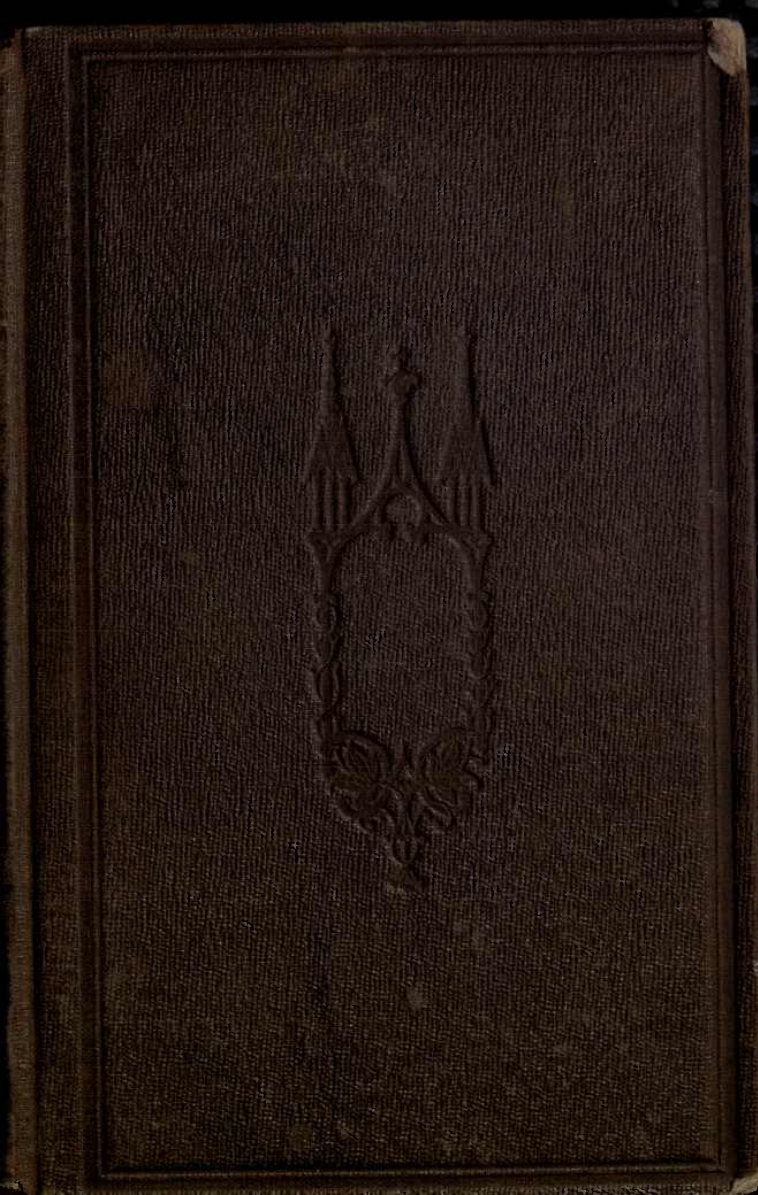
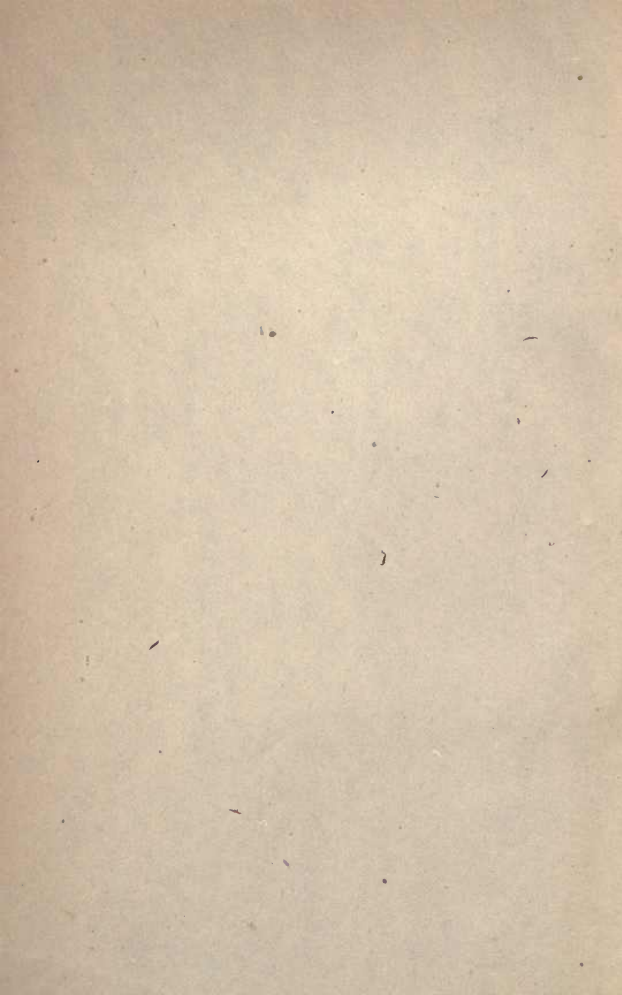
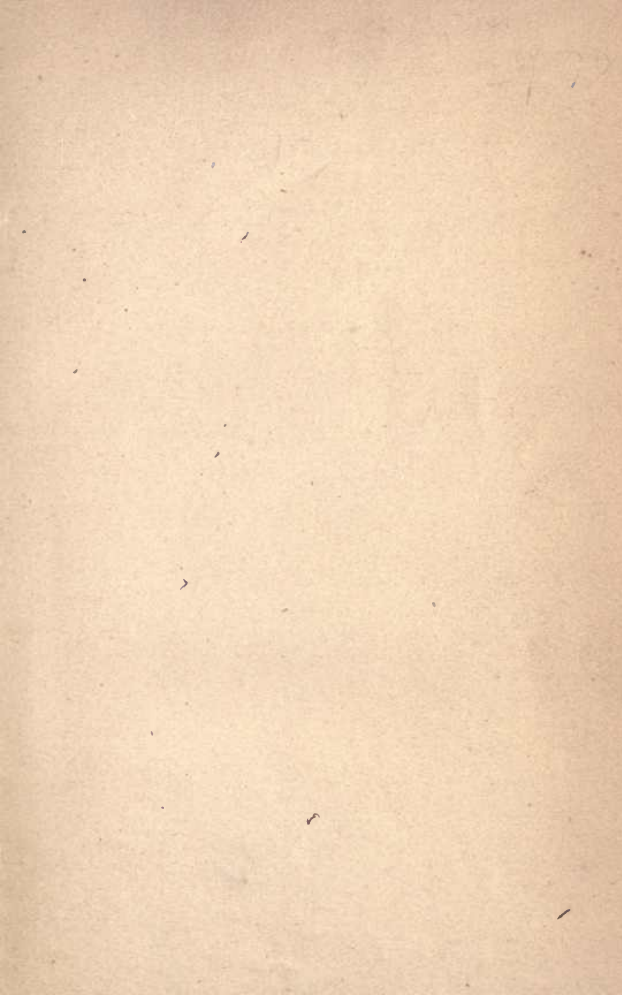








THE
CHAPEL OF ST. MARY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE RECTORY OF MORELAND."

[Mrs Clara M. Thompson]

"Common as light is love,
And its familiar voice wearies not ever."
SHELLEY.

"Suffer me not, in any want,
To seek refreshment from a plant
Thou didst not set; since all must be
Plucked up whose growth is not in Thee."

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P R E F A C E.

It is well known that through the State of New York, and indeed in parts of New England, there are still remnants of families who trace their descent from the original inhabitants of the country. They are, however, rapidly fading away, or mingling with those about them till their identity is lost. We will only detain the reader to say, that "Chet," "Papsy," and the "Judge," in their appearance and peculiarities, as we have painted them, are not visions of the fancy, but true living characters, met in the pathway of the writer.

HILL-SIDE, Easter.

1871

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
MAPLE CLIFF	9
CHAPTER II.	
AGATHA'S HOME	14
CHAPTER III.	
HONORA AND GREGORY	19
CHAPTER IV.	
AGATHA AND PAPSY	25
CHAPTER V.	
DICK WALBRIDGE	30
CHAPTER VI.	
DANGEROUS SOCIETY	36
CHAPTER VII.	
THE REPROBATE SON	46
CHAPTER VIII.	
THE GOVERNESS	57
CHAPTER IX.	
THE RIDGWAYS	64

CHAPTER X.	
THE TWO FRIENDS	70
CHAPTER XI.	
THE GORGE	78
CHAPTER XII.	
AN UNWELCOME ENCOUNTER	86
CHAPTER XIII.	
THE CRUSHED HEART	95
CHAPTER XIV.	
A VISIT TO THE GORGE	102
CHAPTER XV.	
GREGORY AND AGATHA	112
CHAPTER XVI.	
THE JUDGE	121
CHAPTER XVII.	
THE LADIES' SEWING SOCIETY	127
CHAPTER XVIII.	
WORK	136
CHAPTER XIX.	
WARNING	142
CHAPTER XX.	
THE PRODIGAL	151
CHAPTER XXI.	
PAPSY AN OUTCAST	159
CHAPTER XXII.	
GOSSIP	170

CHAPTER XXIII.

WALTON AN INVALID	177
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHAUNCEY AND CHARLOTTE	185
----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXV.

AGATHA'S OUTBREAK	194
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE ARTIST'S STORY	204
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FERGUSONS	211
-------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ISABELLE WINCHESTER	217
-------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXIX.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE	227
--------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXX.

VILLANY UNSUCCESSFUL	236
--------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXI.

MATTERS AT ROCKRIDGE	247
--------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE DISCOVERY	253
-------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE COQUETTE	260
------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXIV.

PIERRE McLELLAN	267
---------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXV.

SELF-CONQUEST	274
-------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE MASTER OF MAPLE CLIFF	283
-------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE SERENADE	291
------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE FISHING EXCURSION	297
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE OFFER REJECTED	309
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XL.

THE RECTOR'S MARRIAGE	319
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XLI.

ST. ANNE'S	326
----------------------	-----

CHAPTER XLII.

RETURN TO MAPLE CLIFF	334
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XLIII.

A VISIT TO OAK BAY	345
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XLIV.

UNWELCOME VISITORS	355
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XLV.

GREGORY'S STORY	363
---------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XLVI.

MERITED WRATH	373
-------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XLVII.

FESTIVAL OF ALL SAINTS	382
----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XLVIII.

CHANGES AND CHANCES	388
-------------------------------	-----

THE
CHAPEL OF ST. MARY.

CHAPTER I.

MAPLE CLIFF.

“The year
On the earth, her death-bed, in a shroud of leaves dead
Is lying.”SHELLEY.

“Things like him must sting,
And higher beings suffer,—’t is the charter of life.”
BYRON.

THE BRIGHT, old-fashioned wood fire burned briskly on the hearth at Maple Cliff. The scene without was dismal; the wind sighed through the beech and maple trees, that spread their arms and dropped their richly tinted autumn leaves over the roof, and the clouds looked angry and sullen, as they flew swiftly across the face of the waning moon. It was a chilly November night, and the occupants of the library drew nearer the fire.

"It seems to me," said a faint, timid voice, "that the child would be happier—more contented, certainly—if you waited till spring before bringing her here."

"If she comes here, Madam," was the stern reply, it is for winter and summer, and I would have her know the worst, which will by no means be the *outer* winter."

The timid voice again ventured. "Why not take two of your brother's children, they would be company for each other?"

"Madam! when your suggestions are needed I will call for them. I have made up my mind. The hope of a family of my own has disappeared, and from my brother's six I shall take the second daughter. Boys leave home as soon as they begin to realize one's hopes; besides, a pleasant female influence is much needed at Maple Cliff."

There was no reply.

Of the early days of Rodney Douglass we have but little to say; now he was "past meridian," the owner of large landed property in the village of Rock-ridge, without an heir to inherit his name or wealth. From active business life, Mr. Douglass had settled himself in the old family homestead, a stern, severe man,

without any of that genial warm-heartedness so attractive in a "green old age." His wife, naturally gentle and affectionate, had been subdued, by a life of little daily severities, into a reserved, timid woman. She had stepped out of her habitual routine of silent acquiescence in making the suggestions mentioned in the commencement of the chapter; now she sunk back into her richly-cushioned chair, and resumed her usual pitiable expression; while her "liege lord" continued his soliloquy.

"I go to Boston to-morrow, and shall return in a day or two with the child. It is my determination to make my choice of the family, and that choice will be Agatha. She is thirteen or thereabouts, past the age of childhood. I have seen her but once: intercourse with my brother has never been satisfactory, and I shall provide that there be communication but seldom, if at all, between the child and those she leaves; indeed, there will be but little danger of that, as my brother is bound for California with his family the first good opening. But I wish you to understand, Mrs. Douglass," he added, raising his voice, "that there is to be no acquaintance formed by the child with the

people in the village. Colonel Clarendon's family and our Rector's are exceptions; but out of these, she is not to know the people of Rockridge."

The frightened wife made no reply to this harsh restriction, till the tall, gaunt figure of her husband stood before her, and, peering into her face with his cold, gray eye, and raising his forefinger in a menacing attitude, he whispered, "Am I understood?"

"Certainly, certainly," replied she, nervously shrinking from his gaze, and trying to smile. "Agatha, Agatha! did you say? Isn't that a singular name?"

"It was my mother's name," replied he, sternly, and she was one I ever found worthy of my love."

To his brother's house Rodney Douglass took his way, through the narrow, irregular streets at the north part of the city of Boston, familiarly known as "North End." Now and then the proud man would draw himself up to avoid touching some person or thing in his way, exclaiming against the filth of the city. At length he paused before a small brick tenement, which had the name "Sidney Douglass" unmistakably engraven on the brass plate. The brothers met as if they had parted but yesterday, when in truth ten suns had sped

their annual round since they had clasped hands. How true is it that prosperous life often eats out the heart, and makes those who have slept in the same mother's bosom almost strangers !

Sidney Douglass and wife belonged to that ever increasing class in society whose life and thoughts are wholly directed to making money ; therefore they were about to leave a situation where they had a comfortable living, with privileges of church, school, and society, for the then unknown regions of "gold digging."

The tempting offer to make one of their children sole heiress to a large estate, upon condition of their renouncing their rights as parents, was accepted almost eagerly, and Rodney Douglass became the lawful father, by adoption, of his niece Agatha. Yes, she was sold for a certain number of acres, and a certain amount of bank-stock ; separated from the sympathies of her childhood, and carried hundreds of miles, to new faces and new scenes.

CHAPTER II.

AGATHA'S HOME.

“Strange is it that our bloods,
In color, weight, and heat poured all together,
Would confound distinction, yet stand off
In differences so mighty.”

SHAKESPEARE.

THE OLD family mansion of Mr. Douglass, the future home of Agatha, was built by the English ancestor, three generations before the present occupant. It had the appearance of a manor-house, with its long, irregular wings, ample dimensions, and substantial walls. The place had always been known in the region as “Maple Cliff.” Below, at the distance of less than half a mile, lay the village of Rockridge, resting on the bosom of a large river, that had its source among the range of mountains in the western border of New England. Woodland Bluff (the residence of the nearest neighbor, Colonel Clarendon), with

its embowered cottage, was in full view from Maple Cliff, on the other side of the stage road that separated the two estates. The right wing of the Douglass homestead contained the rooms that had been appropriated to the newly adopted daughter, and the windows overlooked the wooded bluff, and the village and valley beyond. Perhaps it was fortunate for Agatha that her affections, in their depth and capabilities, had never been brought out in the home she had left. Her first tears were shed as she sat in her little dressing-room on Sunday afternoon, looking into the quiet street, and wishing she had some one to whom she could speak. She had been in her new home three days, and had made acquaintance with the groom, stable-boy, and Papsy, a sort of hanger-on, and "maid of all work" when she chose to be. It was something quite new and pleasant to be called "Miss Agatha," and to be treated with deference by the servants. At home they had but one domestic, and she was always so cross and worn with hard work, that Agatha was glad to escape from the kitchen: at Maple Cliff that part of the establishment outnumbered the parlor, and she found herself always welcome. But Sunday even-

ing was their holiday,—they were all gone, and the little girl leaned her head on her hand while the tears fell fast. She started as a shadow crossed her vision, knowing that her rooms were on the second floor; but when she saw the yellow fingers of Papsy, lifting herself by the pillars of the balcony, her tears were changed to smiles, and the welcome guest raised the window and stepped into the room.

Papsy was not an African, neither was she an Indian, though some of her ancestry were of both these races. She was tall, and straight as an arrow, with high cheek-bones and a tawny skin, but her hair was brown, and her eyes a dark gray. The only trace of African blood was in her full lips and pearly teeth. The mantling color that rose to her cheek, the broad forehead, and the form and color of the eye, betrayed a mingling of the more fortunate Anglo-Saxon race. She belonged to a family who, in some of its members, had served in the Douglass household from the time when New England had slaves within her borders; but she inherited the spirit of the race that “has never been held in bondage,” and all the discipline of Maple Cliff (and rumor said it was very

unsparing) could not tame the remnants of the wild Indian blood that coursed through the veins of Papsy. She had but one excuse for all her wickedness, — “It is this pizin mixture,” referring to her mixed descent. She had an odd way of talking in disconnected sentences, rarely putting more than three or four words together. Two years older than Agatha, she had already contrived to make herself interesting to her “little missis,” as she chose to call her.

“Homesick, little missis?” she said inquiringly, when she saw the traces of Agatha’s tears. “Thought so, — poor thing, — lonesome here, — go with Papsy, — white turkey gone, — hunt her up.”

No urging was necessary, neither did the little girl remember that she had no permission for the walk. Daylight faded away, and the stars came out; the servants one by one returned to Maple Cliff, but nothing was seen of Agatha and Papsy. Mr. Douglass rebuked his wife in the sternest manner for her inattention in not informing herself of Agatha’s whereabouts. As the evening advanced, a servant was despatched to seek intelligence of the child. Young Mr. Clarendon remembered to have seen the missing pair

entering Elder Sparks's meeting-house, as he passed to a third service in the valley below.

Before Pat's return with this information, the voice of Papsy was heard, as she came up the avenue toward the house, singing, "O Canaan, bright Canaan." If harsh words and severity could have helped her on her way to that happy land, she would have been some distance on the road that night. Agatha's dreams were a mingling of singing and crying, and above all the stern voice of her uncle, as he said, "Go to your room, child, and don't leave it again till I send for you."

CHAPTER III.

HONORA AND GREGORY.

“Her soul was like a beehive built of glass,
And you could see her sweet thoughts, every one
Like honey-bees at work; for sweetness she
From everything extracted, and to all
Dispensed it; never niggard of her stores,
Which more for others than herself she kept
Within that hive of honey-thoughts,—her heart.”

COURT JOURNAL.

“**T**HAT WAS Mr. Douglass’s niece in his pew yesterday, Honora,” said Colonel Clarendon to his daughter, as she wheeled his comfortable arm-chair toward the fire. “Do go over, this pleasant morning, and see if you can’t do something for the child; her sad face haunts me.”

“Yes, sister,” said Gregory Clarendon, rising as his father spoke, “let us go over, and rescue this forlorn child from that imp of darkness who bids fair to be her chief friend.”

"Please don't speak so of Papsy, brother," said Honora, laying her hand on his shoulder; "she is a Sunday-scholar of mine."

"She does you credit, Honora! She should be in a House for Juvenile Offenders. She will ruin that little girl, if they are left to run together in this way."

"The child of Mr. Douglass's adoption!" he added impatiently as they walked out,—"how much better is it, sister, at Maple Cliff than with the 'Sisters of Charity'? It would not take me many hours to choose between these two states of life, if I had a *protégée* to provide with a home."

Honora smiled reluctantly, but did not reply.

The call was more satisfactory than might have been expected. Mr. Douglass entertained a high respect for Colonel Clarendon's family, and they were always welcomed at Maple Cliff. Agatha was summoned from her room, where she had remained in obedience to her uncle's commands, to meet Miss Clarendon and her brother.

Rodney Douglass saw in his adopted daughter the reflection of his own spirit, in her flashing eyes and deepening color, and the cold, haughty tone in which

she replied to his questioning. The reproaches of yesterday were rankling in her young heart.

"Douglass has his match," said young Clarendon as they left the house. "I only wish it was the first instead of the last week of my vacation, that I might make the acquaintance of this little Miss, and note progress between her and her adopted father. 'Iron sharpeneth iron.'"

"But there is something touchingly lovely about the child, with all her pride," said his sister. "How I did long to fold her to my heart, and offer that sympathy she so much needs! She has deep feeling, one can see in her large thoughtful eyes. A young heart is easily crushed or hardened by want of sympathy. What cause of thankfulness we have, that our dear father is so full of tenderness for us, since we can hardly remember our mother's love!"

"Yes," replied the young man, "but I cannot talk to father as I do to you. I cannot go to him, with my doubts and struggles with unbelief, as I can come to you."

"And have you, my dear brother, done as your duty requires, and sought counsel of your pastor?"

“Yes, Honora, to please you I did. What comfort could I expect from the immaculate perfection of Dr. Walbridge! Himself too upright, too formal, and unwavering, ever to suffer a doubt! How could he look with any kindness upon one devoted prospectively to the ministry, who is full of uncertainties? When I gave the secret chamber of my soul to his gaze, what do you think he said? ‘He could not conceive of such a state of feeling!’ You may suppose I derived much benefit and satisfaction from the interview.”

“But, Gregory,” replied his sister, a shade of gentle reproof mingling with the sweet tones of her voice, “he is our pastor, devoted, humble-minded, and as such we owe him respect. But after all, there is but One who can keep you in the right way, and guide you into all truth. Seek that guidance, and you will yet see clearly.”

* * * * *

Colonel Clarendon was a retired officer of the United States army. Having been severely wounded in a skirmish with our border Indians, he had left the service, and with his only son and daughter, and a maiden sister as housekeeper, he had retired to his small paternal estate in Rockridge.

Honora Clarendon at the time our story opens was not on the list of *very young* ladies, having already passed her twenty-eighth year. Her life had not been unmarked by sorrow, as might be gathered from the unvarying hue of her black dress, and the subdued and chastened character of her smile, and the somewhat pensive tone of her voice.

In her early youth she had been betrothed to a lieutenant in her father's regiment. The time was fixed for her marriage with the brave Norman Wood; but he had fallen, in the same engagement in which her father had been wounded. Her deep, unspoken grief worked out its proper end, and wherever suffering or distress were to be met in her region, she was there with her angel-like presence. She was several years older than her brother, who looked upon her as the personification of goodness. Whether she was beautiful no one asked, for there was a depth of soul beaming out from those pensive eyes, and a wealth of love in that benevolent mouth, that was magnetic.

Gregory had grown up a serious-minded boy, under the careful training of a judicious father, and gave promise, now he had reached the estate of manhood, that

the fondest wish of the paternal heart would one day be realized, and Colonel Clarendon would see his son a clergyman.

During his college life he had roomed with a young man from New Orleans, a member of a Roman Catholic family, earnest-minded and zealous. They had become warmly attached as friends, and it was natural that each should strive for the conversion of the other to what he deemed the true faith. Pierre McLellan saw Father Eustace often, and was commended and counselled in his efforts for the conversion of the heretic by that wily Jesuit, while Clarendon met his antagonist uncounselled and unadvised. Night after night they sought to vanquish each other, and spent hours that should have been given to study in discussing theological dogmas and practices. These "*talks*" had had their effect on the ardent mind of Clarendon; they had served the first purpose of their instigator, and planted difficulties where before all was plain.

Gregory had fully opened his mind to his sister, and through her influence to his pastor, and he returned to college for his last year with the feeling that at least he must never seek the ministry till his doubts were settled.

CHAPTER IV.

AGATHA AND PAPSY.

"An unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised;
Happy in this, that she is not so old
But she may learn; and happier in this,
She is not bred so dull but she may learn;
Happiest in all, that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed."

SHAKESPEARE.

"DO, MISS NORA," said Papsy, industriously brushing the front piazza, as Miss Clarendon came up the steps at Maple Cliff, the day after her brother's departure for New Haven.

"Good morning, Papsy," Miss Honora replied, putting out her hand, to take the yellow one that was extended to meet hers; "how are Mr. and Mrs. Douglass, and Miss Agatha?"

"Mister gone to town, — little missis homesick, — master scold her, — cry all night."

"Homesick is she?" said Honora; "we must try to

comfort her. But I did not see you at Sunday school last Sunday evening."

"O Miss Nora, I tired, — sleepy, — Dr. Walbridge preach so long, — I go to bed."

Honora was somewhat startled by this downright falsehood, and remembered Gregory's remark that "Papsy did credit to her Sunday-school teacher:" but this was not the time to correct her fault; she therefore passed into the hall. She found Agatha buried in the pillows of a lounge, in the library, devouring with avidity the contents of a very ancient-looking book. She blushed when Honora entered, and hid the book hastily, but, soon recovering herself, she did the honors of the house very properly. It was not long before Honora, with her sweet winning ways, found an entrance into the child's heart, and a friendship was established which was never broken, a friendship worth more to Agatha than all her landed prospects of Maple Cliff. They sat together nearly an hour, when Mrs. Douglass's cat-like step was heard, and that lady made her appearance, looking cautiously round the room, as if she expected to meet some dreaded object. Honora made known her errand, which was to bring

Agatha to Woodland Bluff, to pass the day. Mrs. Douglass stammered in her reply, not daring to give permission in the absence of Mr. Douglass. The child signified by her manner that she would willingly go without his leave; but Honora said gently, "Well, if you cannot go with me to-day, I can stay part of the day with you, and we will have your visit another time." This arrangement satisfied all parties, and Honora made herself quite at home with Agatha, explaining to her the beautiful paintings that hung about the walls; playing battledoor with the child one moment, and waltzes for her to dance the next. Child-like, Agatha was desirous her companion should see the pleasant rooms she called her own. They consisted of a large, airy bedchamber, and a pretty dressing-room attached, furnished with everything for comfort. The first thing that met the eye of her visitor was a heap of old musty volumes in the middle of the floor, a recent importation from some secret hiding-place. They were evidently mates to the book in which Agatha was so deeply interested when Honora came into the library.

"O, I forgot these old books!" said Agatha, blushing crimson, and ringing the bell violently.

"What are they?" said Honora, taking up one that looked as if it might have amused the leisure hours of Noah and his family; it was "The Mysteries of Udolpho." "Did you intend to read them?" she added, taking up another; it was "The Monk."

"I was going to look them over," said Agatha, hesitating. "There is nothing in the library but old law-books and histories, with a few memoirs of good people, that I hate to read. At home, father let us take books from the circulating library, but Aunt Douglass says there is none here."

"I wouldn't read these," replied Honora, persuasively, brushing the dust from her fingers; "we have plenty of nice books at Woodland Bluff, and you may take any of them you please; and then we have a parish library, and a Sunday-school library, full of interesting books for children. Let Papsy put these up where you found them, will you dear?" she added, as the tall form of Papsy came stalking in.

"The chambermaid, Belinda, told me of them," said Agatha, almost weeping at the thoughts of losing her new-found treasure. "She said she had read them all."

"Heaps on um, and more besides," said Papsy,—

“chock full, — noveltry readin’, — Elder Sparks’s damnation literature.” Papsy took the heap of contraband volumes into her apron, and was off, with a very sober face to Miss Clarendon, and a sly wink to Agatha, which said plainly, “Get um agin, little missis.”

“What a funny thing Papsy is!” said the child. “She is n’t negro, and she is n’t white. I asked her what she called herself, and she said, ‘Pizin mixture.’ She is very kind to me, though, and I like her. Aunt Douglass thinks I ought not to go with her so much, but I will.”

Honora put her hand gently over the pouting lips, and, taking the little head lovingly on her breast, she said, “Papsy is a poor unfortunate girl, and you may do her much good, both by example and precept, and you will always be kind and gentle to her; but she is not exactly suited for an intimate companion for my little Agatha.”

Thus Honora conversed with the child, gaining her confidence and her love, and Agatha sank to sleep that night more peacefully than she had done. She had found a friend.

CHAPTER V.

DICK WALBRIDGE.

"But when to mischief mortals bend their will,
How soon they find fit instruments of ill!"

Pope.

WEEKS AND months passed, and Agatha was allowed to go freely to Colonel Clarendon's. Her nature, naturally joyous and affectionate, was brought out from the sullen pride in which it had at first concealed itself. Papsy was restored to her master's favor; she was ever treated by him as a favorite spaniel would have been, now a kick, and now a caress. There was apparently the same attraction as between the dog and his master. Mr. Douglass, though often severe in his treatment of her, would never suffer any other member of the family to reprove her or complain of her. This course naturally gave Papsy a kind of slavish affection for Mr. Douglass.

It happened, one morning in early spring, that she

was appointed to go into a meadow, which lay beyond the house, in search of dandelions for the table. She gave a sly wink to Agatha, and, drawing down her face, gravely asked permission of Mrs. Douglass for the little girl's company.

The mistress of the house hesitated, daring neither to consent nor refuse; however, she thought Mr. Douglass might object, as the grass was wet, and Agatha had a slight cold. The hall door opened at this moment, and the sharp, spectacled eyes of the master peered into the kitchen. His wife shrunk back, as he said, in his usual harsh tones, "Let the child go. Do you wish to deprive her of free air, and sunshine?"

They went into the fields together. Spring, in her morning dress of emerald-green, bestudded with violets, was passing lovely. The contrast between the youthful pair was striking, so much so as to keep Mr. Douglass at the library window, watching them till a turn in the brook, and a patch of woods, concealed them from view.

Papsy had the Indian tread, erect, firm, and rapid; while Agatha tripped along gracefully as a fawn, her slight figure, pure red and white skin, auburn curls,

and delicate hands and feet manifesting her true Saxon descent.

They proceeded rapidly, Papsy carrying a basket, and brandishing the knife with which she was to cut up the plants, at the same time singing, in a melodious and powerful voice, "Farewell, my friends, I must be gone." At length they came to a piece of ground, on the border of the wood, thickly sprinkled with the golden flowers they were seeking. Very industriously they commenced work, Papsy cutting up the plants, which Agatha deposited in the basket. They had nearly finished their task, when a sound of footsteps was heard among the dry leaves, and presently a young man, whom Agatha had never seen, approached them. He was dressed in a brown hunting-coat, a rifle on his shoulder, and a game-bag by his side.

"Dick Walbridge, little missis," whispered Papsy, without once looking up from her employment. The stranger came near, touched his hat to Agatha, and looked knowingly at her companion.

"I thought I would find you here, Pap," he said familiarly; "Miss Douglass, I presume," he added, looking at Agatha. "What's the matter," he said, seeing

the color mounting into Papsy's cheek, and an angry look overshadow her brow. "Why didn't you come to meeting, last night? We missed your voice. Elder Sparks gave us one of his sparkling discourses. He put into father, and you church folks."

"Better mind his own business," sulkily answered the girl.

"The Ridgways were there,—mother and daughters."

"Dare say, smooth-faced hypocrites!" muttered Papsy.

"He thanked Heaven," continued the young man, "that the son of one of the followers of 'the Scarlet Lady' had seen the error of his ways, and mentioned several excellent qualities, in his recommendation of me to the notice of Heaven, which I was not aware of possessing."

"Ugh," was all the reply.

Agatha was diligently thinking, who "the Scarlet Lady" could be. So far from the religious discussions of the day had she been kept, not by the care, but by the indifference of her parents, that she had not even heard of her ladyship.

Papsy took up the basket and knife, and turned home-

ward, without another word to the young man. They had gone but a short distance, when Mr. Walbridge called out, "I saw Chet last night, and I have a message for you." The girl turned and walked slowly back to where he stood, and they conversed together for some time, in a familiar and earnest manner.

Agatha continued her walk toward home, but was overtaken by her companion before she came to the turn in the brook.

"Was that Dr. Walbridge's son, Papsy?" asked Agatha.

"Yes, Dick Walbridge, — wicked wretch, — breaking his poor father's heart," she replied, with a very sober face, and immediately struck into the tune where she had been interrupted, "Where is now the good old 'Lijah."

Agatha, finding Papsy disinclined to conversation, went back to thinking of "the Scarlet Lady," and determined in her own mind to ask Miss Honora Clarendon, at the first opportunity, who she was. Could she be any friend of Miss Clarendon's? *She* always dressed in *black*. Then came another question into her busy brain, — why Miss Clarendon always wore black. She would not dare

ask her that; she would inquire of Papsy. She interrupted her singing, therefore, by the question, "Why does Miss Nora always wear black?"

"Sister of Charity, I spose, — Ekler Sparks says so," was the reply, and the singing continued.

CHAPTER VI.

DANGEROUS SOCIETY.

"May God have mercy upon her [the Romish Church], and upon all those gentle hearts within her, who perchance, in her dark, dim gloom, be feeling after Christ."

FABER.

"Kind wishes and good deeds they make not poor,
They'll home again full laden to thy door;
The streams of love flow back where they begin,
For springs of outward joys lie deep within."

DANA.

DURING THE week following the walk with Papsy, Agatha passed a day at Woodland Bluff, and, a storm of wind and rain coming on, Miss Clarendon despatched a servant for permission for the little girl to stay all night. Colonel Clarendon's family were gathered round the bright fire, rendered necessary by the chilly spring rain, listening to the wind as it swayed the tall forest-trees that overhung the Bluff, and to the roaring of the river, as its swollen waters rushed along.

All at once "the Scarlet Lady" popped into Agatha's head. She sprung to Honora, and, clasping her arms about her, exclaimed, with the eagerness of childhood, "O Miss Nora! please tell me who anybody means by 'the Scarlet Lady.'"

Honora looked at her father, and then at the child, with a look of perplexity and surprise.

"Tell me first darling," she said, recovering herself, and returning the little girl's caress, "who do you mean by '*anybody*'?"

"Why, Elder Sparks, and Dick Walbridge," she replied.

"Dick Walbridge! Agatha, where can you have met him?"

The child looked a little vexed, and then said, "Yes, will you please tell me who *she* is?"

"She is no relation of ours," said Colonel Clarendon, smiling mischievously.

"I will try to tell you," said Honora, seriously, "all I know about her. 'Scarlet Lady' is a term of reproach, applied by many very good people to the Romish Church, because they suppose the prophecies which speak of the woman arrayed in scarlet to refer to that

corrupt body. But it never seemed to me a very Christian mode of speech."

"My daughter," said Colonel Clarendon, looking up and speaking very solemnly, "it is hardly possible to take too strong grounds against Romanism."

"Perhaps not, father; but might we not show a more Christ-like spirit in our condemnation? I have often thought the chains were riveted more closely on the minds of that community by the unsparing denunciations of Protestants; by our not allowing that they have any truth, when in reality they have all,—but so overlaid with corruption and error as to be hidden from view."

Observing the perplexed look on the face of Agatha, Honora took her pocket Testament, and read the seventeenth chapter of Revelation, telling her she supposed this to be the origin of the name "Scarlet Lady."

She drew from the little girl, after they had retired for the night, the time and place of her meeting with Dick Walbridge, and his conversation. The story chased sleep from her pillow, and when Agatha had sunk into a profound slumber, Honora arose, and looked out into the storm. Richard Walbridge she knew well. He

had always been a reckless boy, and now that he was a man rumor called him dissolute. Her father and Dr. Walbridge had long talks about him, and she had more than once heard her father hint the wish that the young man was well out of the way. Here was Agatha, a young, innocent girl, scarcely passed from childhood, brought in contact with him; and Papsy, her • Sunday-scholar, evidently on questionable terms with him! What could she do to save Papsy and to keep Agatha from his acquaintance? She pitied Richard Walbridge, as an angel may be supposed to pity a sinner. She knew his father was stern and rigid in the enforcement of discipline, and the mother over-indulgent; but these were no apologies for base ingratitude. Every means had been tried to bring back the reprobate son. Colonel Clarendon had remonstrated, his parents had pleaded and commanded, in vain; he neglected his studies, and spent his time with doubtful characters. He had been suspended from college in his second year, and was ostensibly pursuing his studies with his father; but whole weeks would pass without his appearance at the Rectory, and it would afterwards be discovered that he had spent his days in a gorge,

among the hills below the village, where a few colored persons, half-breeds and Africans, with a number of families of very poor white people, dwelt. Here Dick had first met Papsy intimately, on her visits to her brother Chet.

Honora thought of poor Mrs. Walbridge, as she listened to the gurgling waters, and a prayer arose from her heart, that God would bring back the wanderer. She wondered why one baptized and brought up with constant religious teaching, as Richard had been, should be left to alienate himself so far from the household of God. She remembered that it is often so; and temptations to doubt the promises of God to parents were presented to her mind, but her well-grounded faith rose above it, and she said, "He is faithful that promised, who also will do it." It is better to feel that poor human nature has erred in the training, rather than doubt for a moment God's *truth*. Thoughts of her own dearly loved brother, and the peculiar temptations with which he was wrestling, came rushing into her soul, and she prayed earnestly, that "God, who knoweth us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of our frailty we cannot always stand up-

right, would grant him such strength and protection, as would support him in all dangers, and carry him through all temptations." She arose from her knees refreshed, and determined to do what she could for the little slumberer beside her.

Honora Clarendon was not one of those sensitive, well-meaning persons, who content themselves with weeping over the sorrows of humanity. To be in danger, trial, or temptation, — ay, to have fallen, — elicited not only her prayers, but her active efforts to help. "May it not be mine," she said to herself, as she listened to the soft breathings of the little girl, "to lead this child in the right way?" From Agatha's own account, and her deficiency in Biblical knowledge, while in other studies she was well advanced, Honora gathered that the influence at home had not been of a religious character; neither could she look to Maple Cliff for the training of the little girl's better nature. Providence had brought the child under her influence. She thanked God and took courage. About Papsy she was more doubtful. For a few months past she had avoided her teacher, and felt, as many of her superiors do, that she was too old and large for Sunday school. Honora fell

asleep, determined on an effort for both. With the first tinge of purple light in the east she arose, and, having attended to her customary morning duties, went to seek her father. She found him, as she anticipated, in the library, studying the large family Bible, the employment of his early morning hours for many years.

"Dear father," said Honora, as she softly entered the room and knelt by his chair, "how are you this beautiful morning? I would not interrupt you, but I wish to ask your counsel, while we can be alone."

Colonel Clarendon embraced his daughter, and prepared himself to listen. She told him plainly all that troubled her, about Agatha and Papsy. He sighed when she spoke of Dick Walbridge, and said: "Poor Dr. Walbridge!

'How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child.'

"Father," said Honora, looking up confidently, "if Richard could be sent away, perhaps into a foreign country, might it not have a good effect upon him? The last time he was here, he said he only wished he was out of this place."

"If he had been my boy, he would have been sent

away long ago," replied the Colonel; "but what he said was only a subterfuge. He hoped some of his friends would help him to the *means* to go. I have no faith in him."

"But," continued Honora, earnestly, "it seems to me if I could only talk with him, — he used to listen to me when we were children together, — I might persuade him to go away, at least. Perhaps he does sometimes wish to do well, but here he is so surrounded with the scenes of his guilt —"

"He could hardly be in a place more free from temptation than Rockridge," replied the Colonel gravely.

"Yes, father, but if he could begin anew. O, there is sometimes so much in beginning *new!*"

Colonel Clarendon did not reply, and after a while she resumed the conversation by speaking of Agatha. "Don't you think, father, that she should be attending to her studies?"

"Certainly she should," he replied, "but you know how strange Mr. Douglass's notions are. He is determined she shall not associate with the village people; of course he will not send her to the Academy, though I doubt if he finds a better school. Perhaps he might

like the idea of a governess : but it seems almost wicked to ask any young lady to mure herself at Maple Cliff."

"A governess!" exclaimed Honora, "to be sure : why didn't I think of it? and Charlotte Morgan is just the person!"

"Charlotte Morgan!" said her father, musingly. "Yes, in most respects she is very suitable. There is only one thing wrong about her ; she would not have compassion enough for the faults and failings she would see in her pupil and employer. Agatha's high-strung and somewhat turbulent nature would dash continually against her propriety. But, after all, Honora, you must give the child society of her own age, or she will seek it in Papsy, and the like. Remember, she has lived always with brothers and sisters, and planted as she now is, in that castle of a house, without a ray of sunshine within, do you wonder that she bends towards what she conceives to be the light, in the form of a companion of some sort?"

"I was thinking, if we could bring it about," suggested Honora, "Anne Walbridge might have the benefit of Charlotte's instructions, with Agatha. Mr. Douglass has no objections to her acquaintance."

"A bright thought, Honora; I will speak to Mr. Douglass. Let's see; Agatha is fourteen, you say. Is it possible? how very small she is! Anne must be a year or two younger. Dr. Walbridge has been very unfortunate in his family. I trust his little daughter may be a comfort to him."

Colonel Clarendon walked home with Agatha after breakfast, and, in a way of his own, brought the conversation between himself and Mr. Douglass around, without seeming in any way anxious about it, to the propriety of having a governess for his daughter. Mr. Douglass first frowned, then looked more favorably upon the proposal; presently he asked the Colonel how he could find a fitting person, one whom he could receive into the sanctity of the family. Colonel Clarendon suggested that he should inquire of Honora; she might have a friend qualified to fill so important a station.

Mr. Douglass was always impatient when any subject of importance was under consideration; and before the end of the week, he requested Honora to write to Miss Morgan. Having now settled matters as far as she was able with regard to Agatha, Miss Clarendon turned her thoughts to Popsy.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REPROBATE SON.

"I know, resolve, and do not, — and anon
The wheel of human custom bears me on."

WILLIAMS.

"And men have stamped me with a curse,
I feel it is not *Thine*:
Thy mercy, like yon sun, was made
On me as them to shine."

IT WAS a bright Sunday afternoon when Honora went out to teach a class her brother had established, which met every Lord's day evening in a school-house below the village. This class was composed of children of the poor, who came from Rockridge and the gorge below, — children whose parents never entered a house of worship, — children of the colored population, and now and then a stray lamb from the flock of foreigners scattered so liberally through our towns and villages.

Contrary to Honora's wishes, (for she knew Mr. Douglass's opinion of the school,) Agatha had asked permission to go; but her uncle had sternly refused, saying, "I never wish to see you in such a motley crew; and wonder that one as refined and delicate as Miss Nora can find any pleasure in such a low set: but when the demon of religious enthusiasm enters into a person, there is no end to absurdity."

Honora walked rapidly to her task. She overtook Dr. Walbridge, who always opened the school for her. He looked sad and worn, and she would not intrude on his sorrows, therefore they walked in silence.

The first thing that met her eye, on entering the school-room, was the form of Papsy, standing in the desk, authoritatively calling the children to order. Dr. Walbridge soon finished his part of the labors, and after the lessons, commendations, and advice of the teacher, which occupied an hour, the school was closed, and Papsy, who had been requested to remain, was left alone with Honora.

"I have been wishing to see you and talk with you for some time, said Miss Clarendon, taking Papsy's hand. "You know I am interested in you, and can have

but one motive — your good — in saying what I shall to you.”

“Yes, Miss Nora, Papsy’s good, — course,” said the girl, drawing down her mouth, and shutting her eyes.

“I am afraid you do not always keep good company, and I wish to warn you of dangers in your path. You are young, and there are those who will take advantage of your youth, and lead you to do what you will deeply regret when you are older.”

The girl did not reply, but, taking from her pocket a large white handkerchief, applied it industriously to her eyes. A deep blush overspread Honora’s face, for on the corner of the handkerchief was marked in full, “Richard Walbridge.” Emboldened by this tangible proof of their intimacy, she proceeded.

“Papsy, I refer particularly to Mr. Walbridge. You see him often, and are on familiar terms with him, and I wish to warn you, my child, before it is too late, that he is dangerous society for you.”

“I know it, Miss Nora, — know it, — but Papsy’s nobody, — nobody cares for Papsy!”

“Do not say that,” replied Honora, “the same eye watches over you that guards me, and there is the

same sorrow when you go astray. Your soul is just as precious. Hear me Papsy," she said more earnestly, "shun that man, or he will be your ruin. He can have only a bad design in seeking your company. You used to say you loved Miss Nora. Do, for my sake, for your own sake, quit his society at once, and forever."

"I promised to meet him to-night," said the girl, now really weeping,—"and I must," she added, with an earnestness that startled her teacher.

"Where?" said Miss Clarendon.

"In the Gorge," replied Papsy.

"I cannot let you go," replied Honora, with deep emotion, "I cannot let you. Come home with me, be a good girl, and I promise to help you to be somebody; I promise you you shall be respected, yes, beloved, if you will seek goodness and purity. But if you go on as you are now going, I see nothing before you but a bitter life of suffering; and, O Papsy, a dark, black gulf after."

"Miss Nora," said the girl, much moved by the earnestness of the appeal, "Papsy go this once,—the last time."

Honora hesitated. At length she said, "I wish to see Mr. Walbridge: could you go down to the Gorge and bring him here *now*? If you will, I will remain here; you will not keep me waiting long."

"Dick won't come," said Papsy, musingly, "nor let me come."

"Yes," replied Honora, "if you tell him Miss Clarendon calls him, by the memory of school-days to meet her here. Stay!" she added, writing a few words on a slip of paper. "Give him this,—I know he will not refuse."

Honora stood at the window of the little dilapidated school-house, appropriated to the children of the Gorge, and watched Papsy as she strode along, singing,—

"Sister Matilda's in the kingdom."

She thought of the prejudice that consigned this poor girl to a life of degradation, and made her virtue a matter of small importance in worldly eyes; other bitter thoughts of the wrongs of society came to her mind, and she raised her tearful eyes to Heaven, praying that she might be enabled to save this child, whose soul was bought with the same price as her own, from utter

ruin. Sunlight faded away, and the many-colored clouds that come after grew fainter and fainter, and by and by the moon arose, and she began to fear Papsy was treacherous. As this thought was deepening into certainty, she turned her head, and saw Richard Walbridge approaching from an opposite direction, and alone. He entered somewhat timidly, and, bowing coldly, took a seat. Honora's heart beat violently, and she could not speak.

"Miss Clarendon flatters me by wishing to see me," said the young man. "It is long since I have been so highly honored."

"Richard," said Honora, when she recovered her voice, rising and putting on her bonnet, "walk home with me; I have much that I wish to say to you, and I must leave this place."

"Will Miss Nora venture so far as to permit me to walk through the village with her?"

"Yes, Richard," she replied, "ill-natured remark shall not prevent my doing an act of kindness when I can."

They went into the street together,—the pure, noble-hearted girl, and the reprobate son.

"Richard," she said, sadly, as they walked along,

"you promised great things when you were a boy. Have you given them all up, and do you mean to content yourself with the life you lead?"

"Miss Clarendon," replied the young man, "you know as well as I can tell you that the want of means alone keeps me where I am. My father still insists upon my studying. I have no taste or heart for a student's life; I was born a rover, and should have left the country long ago, only that I did not choose to go as a beggar, without outfit or means to carry me to the next State."

"Would you leave this part of the country at once, if you had the means?" inquired his companion.

"Yes, to-morrow," he replied; "what have I to bind me here? I have talents for business, and my mother would be willing I should be anything but a sailor; but my father—" he said, with something very like an oath.

"Hush, Richard," said Miss Clarendon, in a voice of authority. "Will you promise me, on your honor as a man, that if I will procure the means, and your father's consent, you will go somewhere, and endeavor to retrieve your character?"

"On my *honor*, Miss Nora? Do you believe in such a *myth* after to-night?"

"Yes, Richard," she replied, without appearing to understand his look. "If you give me your word, I will trust it. I do not believe you can wholly forget all the teachings we had as children, around that holy altar."

"I promise to leave this part of the country," said the young man, somewhat sullenly; "but as to bearing in mind all the pious teaching of my father, backed as it has been by unmitigated severity at home, that I will not promise."

They parted when they reached Woodland Bluff. Walbridge walked thoughtfully homeward, while Honora went to the library to consult with her father.

The Rectory, the nominal home of Richard, was a plain two-story house near the church. Five very tall poplar-trees were the only attempt at ornament about it; and everything within and without was pervaded with an air of unapproachable stiffness.

The study door stood open when the young man entered the hall.

"Richard," said a stern voice from within, "how

have you passed the hours of the holy Sabbath? Your seat in church was vacant."

"The last hour, sir," replied the son, "was spent in better company than I expect to meet again for some time."

"Remember, Richard," replied the father, "the curse upon Sabbath-breakers."

The young man slammed the door with an oath, and went out.

Dr. Walbridge was a well-meaning man, — yes, he was a good man, — humble-minded, devoted to his work ; but he could not win souls, for he could not enter into the heart. His ideas of parental authority were clearly defined, and strenuously urged and acted upon. His son, naturally wayward and wilful, had been made more rebellious by the continued preaching and reproving of his father, joined with his stern and rigid discipline. Every boyish folly was magnified into an offence, and punished with a severity that made little distinction between moral delinquency and the giddy thoughtlessness of youth.

Mrs. Walbridge was a direct contrast to her husband ; easy and self-indulgent, she weathered the storms of life

on her oars. Her husband's severity she balanced by over-indulgence. They had been blessed with several children; but the greater blessing had been vouchsafed the little ones, and they had been taken one by one, till only the eldest and youngest remained. Anne was a quiet little girl of a dozen years, possessing her mother's good-natured, easy temperament, united to her father's conscientiousness and sincerity. She was the sole pet of her father, and when they were alone he would unbend from his tall stiffness, and stoop to caress his "little Nannie." It is doubtful if he had bestowed an act of endearment upon Richard since his infancy. He fancied it would make his eldest boy *unmanly*. The mother, on the contrary, lavished all the fondness of which she was capable on the son, overlooking all his delinquencies, and even at times encouraging him in wrong-doing, by acts of deception, which she answered to her conscience by the plea, "that young men must have some amusement, and Dr. Walbridge was so strict."

Such were the parents, and such was the son.

Honora Clarendon, with her quiet trust in God, could do wonders; and in less than a week she had procured sufficient funds to carry Richard Walbridge to Califor-

nia, where he expressed a wish to try his fortune, and procured, what she found far more difficult to obtain, his father's consent to his departure. Dr. Walbridge was blessed with any amount of persistency, and he had resolved Richard *should study*. How Honora, with her gentleness, brought him to give up this favorite project, remains a secret; but we may guess that the knowledge she imparted (through her father), when all other arguments failed, of the trystings of Richard and Papsy, had something to do with the change.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GOVERNESS.

"Labor is rest, from the sorrows that greet us,
Rest from all petty vexations that meet us,
Rest from sin-promptings that lure us to ill.
Work, and pure slumber shall wait on thy pillow;
Work, thou shalt ride over care's coming billow.
Lie not down wearied 'neath woe's weeping willow,
Work with a stout heart and resolute will."

MRS. OSGOOD.

HONORA WAITED patiently the reply to her letter to Charlotte Morgan. She knew her friend was slow in making up her mind on important subjects. Therefore, when two weeks passed, and Colonel Clarendon thought it "very strange," and Mr. Douglass begun to be a little sharp about the matter, Honora quietly "kept hoping on." At length, the letter, with the post-stamp of Philadelphia, was put into her hand. It was both satisfactory and characteristic, and we transcribe it.

“PHILADELPHIA, May, 18—.

“Your letter, my dear Honora, required so much consideration, that I have deferred the reply till I could give you a decided one. My home here is uncomfortable, my position annoying. Your society, and that of your honored parent, my father’s friend, would be delightful; and then to live in Rockridge, whose wild and beautiful scenery I have longed to look upon, this too would be only happiness. But all these inducements did not make it seem *right* for me to leave here. I wished to feel, that to go to the situation proposed was to go to ‘that state of life unto which it had pleased God to call me.’ The matter was decided yesterday, by circumstances that break up my home here. Now I am ready to go to Maple Cliff, at such time as shall suit Mr. Douglass.

“You kindly urge my visiting you, a few weeks before entering on my new charge. After due consideration of all that you tell me of the young person to be committed to my care, the length of time she has been out of school, &c., I feel it my duty to forego the pleasure of a visit at Woodland Bluff, and enter at once upon my charge at Maple Cliff.

"With kind regards to your honored father, and love to Aunt Martha,

"I am truly yours,

"CHARLOTTE MORGAN."

"How like Charlotte!" exclaimed Colonel Clarendon, as he folded the letter. "So exact to duty, even at the risk of appearing ungrateful! Somewhat formal, Honora?"

His daughter blushed, for she remembered to have had the same thought, after the first reading; but a second perusal, and the memory of the past, crushed the feeling, and she replied: "But, father, there is not a warmer or truer heart beats than Charlotte's."

"And yet, daughter," he said, with a look of paternal pride mingled with affection, "she does not make friends like my Honora."

"Her temperament is different from mine, father."

"No, Nora, it is not that; she is as enthusiastic on many subjects as you are; but there is a withdrawing of herself from the *common* sympathies of her race, that reminds me strongly of my aristocratic friend Morgan."

The day was fixed for the arrival of the governess at Maple Cliff. Pat had been despatched, with horses and carriage, to meet Miss Morgan at the cars. In the mean time Mr. Douglass had walked the room, scolding till he had worked his wife into a paroxysm of fear, by stopping in his long strides just before her, and saying, in a withering tone, "Madam, you may thank yourself for this encumbrance,—yes, yourself. Had you been what Rodney Douglass's wife should have been, our family affairs had not been submitted to the gaze of strangers!"

She endeavored to reply, but he stopped her short in a peremptory tone: "No apologies, Madam, you need make no apologies! The work is yours, and you must take the consequences, if all the world come to know that Rodney Douglass's wife is —"

He did not finish the sentence, but, turning on his heel, stalked into the hall in a towering rage. The door opened, and Miss Morgan was announced. It must be owned, he was somewhat abashed, and descended not very gracefully from his high flight, and gave the lady a cool reception. His remarkable penetration into character told him at once, that he had no weak

vacillating woman to deal with. He knew she would not be agreeable to him as Honora, but he could respect her.

Charlotte Morgan had been an orphan about four years. Brought up in comfortable circumstances, with a prospect of affluence by the death of her father, at the age of twenty she was left penniless and dependent. Descended in a direct line from one of the bravest of our Revolutionary heroes, poverty was an evil to be met and conquered, and dependence was a slavery to which she would not submit. Her education had been of a superior order, and with that she entered as governess in the family of one of her father's "friends in prosperity." Her position had been exceedingly uncomfortable, but she had borne it for years, confiding her sorrows to no one, except very sparingly in her letters to Honora. The sudden failure of her employers had opened the way for her to seek a living elsewhere.

Honora, in her account of the situation, had mingled enough of her probable trials with her inducements, to convince her somewhat austere friend that her life at Maple Cliff would not be *pleasure-seeking*.

The task of bringing Agatha Douglass into habits of

regularity and discipline was not as difficult as might be supposed. Although the last six months had been days of unrestrained liberty, saving where her will clashed with that of Mr. Douglass, her early life had been spent with brothers and sisters, and there is nothing like a large family to bring one to an understanding of the rights of others.

Her religious training Miss Morgan found most deficient, particularly her entire want of a sense of responsibility.

As a work of supererogation (Mr. Douglass said), Charlotte had undertaken to civilize Papsy; but she found the untamed Indian nature remaining, and fully developed by the life she had led at Maple Cliff. No one had ever attempted to govern her before, save her master; and Charlotte soon found that control in any degree was out of the question. Therefore she was obliged to content herself by endeavoring to keep Agatha from Papsy's society. In this she was continually thwarted by Mr. Douglass, who, in spite of hints from Miss Morgan, and now and then a timid word from his wife, persisted in allowing Agatha to spend her hours of recreation in long walks with her colored friend.

Anne Walbridge became a constant attendant on Miss Charlotte's instructions ; and she, gentle, yielding, and easily governed, with early religious training, soon became (unacknowledged by herself) Miss Morgan's favorite.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RIDGWAYS.

“The world has grown so bad,
That wrens may prey where eagles dare not perch.
Since every Jack became a gentleman,
There’s many a gentle person made a Jack.”

SHAKESPEARE.

“NOW, GALs,” said Mrs. Ridgway (whom we would introduce to our readers), as she bustled about the room after dinner, “here you’ve been tryin’ this ever so long to get in with the Douglass family. Here’s a right nice chance! Just go call on that young woman I heard you say was in the pew yesterday. They say she’s hired to teach that niece of theirs. A mighty wild piece she is, trailing down to the Gorge with Papsy, and I s’pose they’d think her pizen’d to send her down here to school.”

“A new way of getting into good society, ma, calling

on the governess of the family!" said Miss Julia Ridgway, with a toss of her head, and a curl of her very short upper lip.

"Well, sister," said Eliza, the younger Miss Ridgway, with a sanctimonious drawing down of the eyelids, "I think I shall call. I thought of it Sunday in church, she is so pious and devout, and has such a *distingué* air."

"How did she know she was '*so devout*'?" whispered Tom in the ear of his sister Julia. "Eliza," he said in his usual voice, "maybe she is Romish!"

"O, don't suggest such an idea!" she replied, holding up her hands with holy horror. "When I hear girls like Honora Clarendon defending the Catholics, as she did to you the other day, it is time to fear for the truth."

"Defend the Catholics! She did no such thing!" replied Tom. "She merely remarked to one who said Romanists were worse than infidels, that she thought we might take pattern from them in zeal and earnestness."

"She would attack you, Eliza, as she did me, on your use of the word Catholic," said Julia sneeringly.

"I am not to be taught by Honora Clarendon," retorted Eliza, a flush of anger passing over her little, pale face. "Any one who carries herself so much above all the rest of the world as she does —"

"False! false!" said Tom energetically.

"Well, don't quarrel about her, children," said Mrs. Ridgway persuasively; "only try and get into her good graces, for she belongs to a very genteel family. I can remember the Clarendons as long as I can remember anything, and they was always one of the first families. Colonel Clarendon married a Wilbur, Judge Wilbur's daughter."

"Good blood,—good blood," grunted the father of this interesting family, from his lolling chair in the corner, where he had been dozing for the last hour.

"There! I declare! Who's near when you're talking about him?" exclaimed Mrs. Ridgway, as she lifted the corner of the curtain, and looked into the street. "There goes Miss Clarendon in her everlastin' black, and that governess woman with her! Where can they be going?"

"On some errand of mercy, ma," said Tom. "Sister of Charity, you know the Elder says."

"I wonder if she never means to take off her black?" continued Mrs. Ridgway. "Pa," she said, addressing her dozing husband, "how long ago is it since young Wood was killed? Six year, ain't it?"

"More 'n that!" drawled her better half.

"See what a proud, haughty gait Honora Clarendon has!" said Eliza. "Any one could read her character in her step. That Miss Morgan stoops a little, don't she?"

"I don't believe Miss Clarendon will ever marry," said Tom, looking over his sisters' shoulders, as they peeped through the blinds, after Honora and Charlotte.

"Tom," said Julia, "when does Gregory Clarendon finish his studies?"

"He is in his last year at Yale; and then his profession. They say he is to be a clergyman."

"Yes," said little Miss Eliza, musingly, "what a beautiful young man he is! So earnest! so pious! How delightful it is to see a young man giving his best days to the service of religion! What a fine reader he is, too! The modulation of his voice is perfect! And what a lovely hand he has!"

Ahem!" said Tom, with a knowing look at Julia.

"But here comes Deacon Dobbin and his wife, girls; you better scud."

"O dear, yes!" they exclaimed in a breath, as they rushed up stairs. "Not at home," they added to the green Irish girl who tended the door.

The Dobbins were despatched without admittance, much to the disappointment of Mrs. Ridgway, who longed for the nice dish of discourse Mrs. Dobbin was sure to introduce.

"Tom," she said mournfully, "the gals are crazy to get Nora Clarendon here, and they can't contrive any way but to have the sewing society. Your father would n't like it, I guess. We don't belong to Dr. Walbridge's meetin', and I'm afraid Elder Sparks would blaze about it. I'd just as lief they'd have it. It's nat'ral they should want to get into the best society, and why shouldn't they? Your father is worth more than all the Clarendons and Douglasses together."

"I would n't mind what Elder Sparks says about it, ma," said the young man. "Father won't object. Have the society if the girls want it, now Dick Walbridge is gone."

"Does anybody know whether he really has gone," said his mother, "and whereabouts?"

"Nobody unless it is Julia," he replied. "Dick is good company, but I don't want him for a brother, at least while he leads the life of a loafer," he said, turning on his heel and leaving the room.

CHAPTER X.

THE TWO FRIENDS.

"She never found fault with you; never implied
Your wrong by her right; and yet men at her side
Grew nobler, girls purer, as through the whole town
The children were gladder that plucked at her gown."

BROWNING.

IT WAS a beautiful afternoon in June. Dr. Walbridge had sent to Miss Clarendon a note, asking her to go to the Gorge to visit a poor woman, a communicant of the church, who had been taken suddenly ill. Honora requested Charlotte to accompany her, and, as Mr. Douglass had given Agatha permission to go out with Papsy for strawberries, Charlotte felt at liberty to accept the invitation of her friend. It was a distance of more than two miles, a walk Honora often took, in looking after her Sunday-scholars, and in other acts of charity. There was a way of reaching this wild place by water, that was less than half that distance; but this

was seldom practicable for Honora, unless her brother was with her to row the boat.

As has been said, Mr. Douglass's and Colonel Clarendon's estates lay above the village, overlooking it; the Gorge was below the village, a narrow valley, between two mountainous bluffs, through which the waters of the river rushed with increased rapidity, from the narrowness of their bed.

It seemed separated from the rest of the world. The huts and hovels of the inhabitants were planted without order among the rugged crags and dense thickets on either side. It was a wild place, and many of its inhabitants partook of its character. It opened to the north and south; the sun therefore did not penetrate its fastnesses till the world of Rockridge was far in the day, and night came down apace upon the valley.

Honora and Charlotte interchanged that flow of thought and feeling that characterizes true friendship as they walked. Charlotte, uncommunicative to the world at large, had few reserves with Honora; Honora, warm-hearted and affectionate to all, reserved her confidences for the ear of Charlotte.

"Nora," said Miss Morgan, as she pulled to pieces a

sprig of St. John's-wort she had plucked by the wayside, "do you think I can ever gain an influence with Agatha,—a controlling influence?"

Honora looked into the thoughtful face of her friend with a sweet look of sympathizing love, and replied, "Yes, Charlotte, influence her to almost any extent, if you can make her love you."

"Ah! Honora, but how am I to bring that about?"

"*'Love goes towards love,'* was one of our copies at school, and it is none the less true now than in the time of Shakespeare," replied Honora.

"Oh!" said Charlotte with a sigh, "how I wish I had your faculty of making everybody love me! Agatha is an uncommon child; her intellectual developments are remarkable, though her ways are childish; but her religious training has been little better than that of a heathen. If she had been baptized, I should have more hope of a good result from my efforts, for the covenant promises are so encouraging, and you can sometimes convince a baptized child that there is something they can do, with the help of God, to assist your efforts. Agatha has scarce a thought of her responsibility to a higher power, and she questions and reasons in matters of faith and duty like a lawyer."

"I have noticed this disposition in her," replied Honora, "and I am convinced she will never see the truth till her affections are enlisted; and these can only be acted upon by patient, enduring love and sympathy. It will be a very weary work sometimes, dear Charlotte; but then the *end*! The precious privilege

'to work for Him
Who works for all.'"

There was a pause for a few moments, and then Miss Clarendon said, very gently, as if half afraid of wounding her friend's feelings, "Would you like me to tell you, Charlotte, just what I fear?"

"Honora," replied Miss Morgan, "why do you ask me? You have always been my truest friend, and I was never more at a loss for the best way than I am now. What is it you fear particularly?"

"I am afraid, dear Charlotte, that you will make a distinction between Anne Walbridge and Agatha that will hinder your influence with the latter."

"Looking upon one as a Christian, and the other as a heathen, you mean," said Charlotte; "I own to having had the feeling."

"Anne is a quiet, good child," replied Honora, "but

she will never exert half the power, for either good or evil, that Agatha will. Surely it is not this child's fault, so much as it is her misfortune, that she is no more religiously inclined. We must take the circumstances of life into account in forming our judgment of character. Imagine Agatha from her infancy under judicious religious teaching,—the teaching of the Church; that unsubdued wilfulness changed into a determination to do right; that earnest love of the beautiful, and affectionate impulsiveness, guided always by the truth; that proud heart yielding to acknowledged authority,—the authority of Christ and his Church;—and what a lovely working character we should have; just such a character as I am hoping some day to see in Agatha. It is an advantage that she has been kept a *child*, instead of being made into a little woman."

The young ladies had now reached the village, and were passing through the main street, and the conversation changed. Honora pointed out the residences as they went by, and gave her companion a brief account of the inhabitants.

"Here lives Mr. Ridgway," she said, as they came opposite the pretentious brick house that loomed above

the cottages and simple country dwellings around. "He is the owner of a factory village, seven miles below, called Ridgeville. He has two daughters, and a son who is destined for the bar. The young ladies have lately come into our parish; the parents attend Elder Sparks's ministrations. The girls are somewhat peculiar in their ways, and annoy Gregory very much by their display."

"They must be the same I heard Papsy and Agatha talking about," said Miss Morgan. "Agatha asked Papsy who that was at church 'that looked like a full-blown peony, with a sister who drew down her face and looked out of the corners of her eyes to see if anybody was looking at her.' I could not suppress a smile, although I was shocked at Papsy's characteristic reply, 'Scribes, — Pharisees, — hypocrites, — Ridgways.'"

"Yes," replied Honora, "the poor girl bears a little grudge toward the elder sister. I told you about young Walbridge. He has paid Miss Julia some marked attentions the past winter: whether they amounted to anything serious I don't know, but they were enough to excite Papsy's suspicions. Poor girl!" she added, "when I see how lifeless and indifferent she is since

Richard went away, I fear she cared more for him than will be for her peace of mind."

"She is a strange being!" said Charlotte. "I wonder at Mr. Douglass allowing such freedom and familiarity of intercourse between this girl and Agatha. Don't you think the intimacy will be injurious to the child?"

"I am afraid she may gain a knowledge of things she ought not to know," replied Honora.

"I have attempted," said Charlotte, "to speak to Mr. Douglass about this, but there is a certain familiarity between himself and Papsy that I cannot understand. He treats her like a favorite house-dog. She is the only person with whom I ever heard him joke. I cannot reconcile this with his extreme haughtiness and pride. Only last week, he made her stand in a tableau with Agatha. It was really a brilliant thing, and Papsy, with her scarlet robes and glittering jewels, looked like an Indian princess. All went pleasantly, till Mr. Douglass pronounced the name of the picture, 'The pure and mixed races.' Papsy turned deadly pale, clenched her hands, and bit her lips, till the blood burst from them. Mr. Douglass put her out of the room

forcibly, before she could finish the very impudent speech she had commenced, forbidding Agatha (who of course took her part) to follow. We did not see Papsy for the remainder of the week, and Mr. Douglass was absent-minded and anxious. I asked Agatha if she knew where Papsy was, and she said, 'With her brother Chet in the Gorge.'"

CHAPTER XI.

THE GORGE.

“He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast;
He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.”

COLERIDGE.

THE YOUNG ladies had reached the entrance of the Gorge, while Miss Morgan was giving the account of the tableau. Charlotte, who had never been in this strange place, was startled by the wildness of the scenery. The houses looked like eagles' nests among the rocks. There was a stone hut, covered with a luxuriant grape-vine, near the very top of the eastern bluff. “That is Chet's castle,” said Honora, pointing it out to her friend, — “Papsy's retreat in times of trouble. Chetwood married a white girl, two or three years since, and there they live apparently very

harmoniously. Chet is the ruling power in this region, almost a lord."

"What a frightfully beautiful place!" said Charlotte, as she looked up the precipitous sides of the bluffs. "How do they contrive to get up there?"

"There is a winding path, not very difficult of ascent," replied Honora. "The house to which we are bound is that hut just below Chet's, on that open level spot."

They came into the winding path, that led now through dense woods, and then across broad open patches, that afforded extensive views of the valley. As they advanced to the second opening, the figure of a man was seen coming down from Chet's aerie. With agile step he sprung from rock to rock, never in the path, but always on the ledges that lay outside towards the river. One who had seen Chet could never forget him. His powerful frame, broad chest, large head, erect form, dark piercing eyes, and thin lips, marked him as a man of power; but his cheek was tinged like the faded oak-leaf, and the curse of Indian blood rested upon him. Had he been taught to *act*, he might have passed as an Italian or a Spaniard. That the curse of

his mixed blood cut like a sharp iron into his very heart, might be read in the expression of scorn that curled his lip and deepened the lustre of his eye. He paused for a moment in his descent, on the pinnacle of a very high crag, and, shading his eyes with his hand, gazed eagerly down the river.

As he turned his head, and saw the young ladies, he stepped for the first time into the path. Charlotte was somewhat timid about going on, but Honora assured her Chet was perfectly friendly. As he stood one side to allow them to pass, Honora said, kindly, "Good evening, Mr. Chetwood. How is Rosa?"

"Rosa is better; thanks to Miss Nora's kindness," he replied, bowing.

"How is Aunt Polly this afternoon?" inquired Honora; "we came down to see her."

"Failing fast," he said, sadly; "she is in another fit just now. I came out to look for the Doctor; he has not seen her since two days. White folks must be attended first," he added, bitterly, suddenly turning away, and springing from rock to rock till he was out of sight.

There could be no mistake in Aunt Polly's descent

in a direct line from Ham. For more than forty years, she had been known in and about Rockridge by the appellation of "Aunt Polly;" having served in many families, but always keeping her tumble-down hut at the Gorge as a home. Observation and experience will show that the instinctive love for the little spot called "home" is perhaps deeper in the heart of the negro than in that of his more fortunate white brother. It is rare to meet a free colored person, even in extreme poverty, who would exchange his wretched hut to live *permanently* in any family.

The motley group that filled "Aunt Polly's" hovel were dispersed by the entrance of the young ladies. There was every shade of color, and almost every age, assembled in the room: shouting, crying, praying, were all carried on in a breath. The sick woman lay in a stupor, and they, supposing her dying, had assembled to speed the parting spirit. Orbie, Aunt Polly's only child, was left highly indignant by the loss of so much good company; and when Miss Morgan told her perhaps her mother's life depended on her being kept quiet, she replied testily, "It's hard keepin' neighbors out, when folks is sick." To Honora, it seemed

all-important that Dr. Woodbury should see his patient at once, and she looked about outside the hut for some one to send for him; but the group of attentive neighbors had entirely disappeared. Almost perpendicularly above her was the stone hut of Chet, and he standing in the doorway. She beckoned to him, and he was before her almost immediately. "Chet," she said in a tremulous voice, frightened by the rapidity with which he had descended the rocks, "will you go to Dr. Woodbury, and say to him Miss Clarendon urgently begs that he will come now, with you, and see Aunt Polly; and Chet," she added, lowering her voice, "can't you prevent all this noise and confusion in the sick-room."

"The dirty black crew!" he said contemptuously. "No wonder white folks treat them like dogs! And yet," he added, fiercely, "who made them what they are? Who degraded them?" He did not wait for a reply, but, running down the rocks to the river, seized his oars, jumped into the boat, and was out of sight before Honora went into the hut.

It was but a short time ere Chet returned, accompanied by Dr. Woodbury, a spruce, precise little man,

full of apologies to Miss Clarendon because he had not seen his patient that day, and disagreeable compliments to herself and Miss Morgan for their unheard-of kindness, in walking so far to see "this sort of people." As Honora met him often in her visits to the sick, and it was his invariable custom to talk in this way, his conversation made no impression upon her, but Charlotte's good sense was so disgusted, that she could hardly reply civilly. Chet stood in the doorway, his whole face and attitude expressive of utter contempt for the little Doctor and his compliments. Active measures soon restored Aunt Polly to consciousness, and the gracious disciple of Galen departed, after Honora had requested him to come daily to the hut, and referred him to her father for his fee.

Miss Morgan bathed the forehead and hands of the sick woman, and Honora arranged her bed and dress with tenderness and care.

"Lord bless you, ladies," said Aunt Polly, when she found her voice, "I thought my speerit was gone, but He knows best! The Lord be praised for all His marcies! It is kind on you to come and see us poor folks, but you'll get your reward. 'In'smuch as ye

done it to the least on um,'— don't it say so?" she said, putting her hand on a greasy Testament that lay by the bedside.

"Shall I read to you, Aunt Polly?" said Honora, taking the book. In a low voice she read the thirteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. This account of the most touching service of Christ to his disciples seemed almost new to Charlotte. So deep was the impression, that she said to herself, "Why is it that I am not what Honora Clarendon is?" An earnest desire to embrace *everybody* with her affections sprung up in her soul. Honora read prayers from the Office for the Visitation of the Sick. When they rose from their knees, Chet was in a retired corner of the room, his head bowed on his hands, where he remained unmoved till the ladies left the hut. He followed them, however, before they had gone far, offering to row them home by the short cut, round the bluff; but they declined, as they were to carry their report to Dr. Walbridge from Aunt Polly, on their way through the village.

"What a singular being!" said Miss Morgan, turning about to look at Chet, as he leaped from crag to crag. "Honora, is he really Papsy's brother?"

"Yes," replied Honora, with some hesitancy, — "perhaps only half-brother. They had the same mother."

"Papsy is the darker of the two," replied Charlotte.

"Her skin is darker, but her hair and eyes are lighter," replied Honora. "If Chet had been religiously educated, he might do incalculable good in this neighborhood. They all look up to him, and he guides them like a leader."

"Is he a bad man?" inquired Charlotte, turning round again to look after him.

"He is honest and truthful as the best," replied her companion. "I would trust him anywhere; but he has the Indian revenge, and it would not be wise to make him an enemy. He is firm and unfaltering as a friend. He would brave any danger to serve my father or Gregory, because they took his part in some town quarrel about the school, in which the Anglo-Saxon blood sought to crush Chet. He has never forgotten it, and any favor he can do us as a family is done with zeal. Gregory and he are fast friends."

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNWELCOME ENCOUNTER.

"There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out."

SHAKESPEARE.

"Other men's sins we ever bear in mind,
None sees the fardel of his faults behind."

HERRICK.

THE SUN had disappeared behind the western bluff, and the Gorge grew dark, before the ladies came out into the village. There the sky was bright with many-colored clouds. The call upon Dr. Walbridge was short, and they had closed the Rectory gate and turned homewards, when three persons approached them as if by accident. They proved to be Tom Ridgway and his sisters, who had planned the meeting when they saw Miss Clarendon enter the Rectory gate. Much to the annoyance of Honora, and the vexation of Charlotte, they insisted upon seeing the ladies home.

In vain Honora and Charlotte assured them they were not at all afraid. They declared they would either leave Tom to attend them, or they would all go; of course the latter proposition was the more acceptable.

"You have been to the Gorge?" said the elder Miss Ridgway, taking Honora's arm. "What a horrid place it is! I should think you'd be afraid to be there so late as this."

"We have been to see Aunt Polly," replied Miss Clarendon; "she is very ill."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Eliza, "I am surprised that I had not heard of it; I really must go down to-morrow. If I had known you were going, I would gladly have made one of the company. It is a delightful duty in which you have been engaged," she said, taking Miss Morgan's arm, "visiting the sick and destitute. One really feels as if one was doing something."

No one replied to this sage remark, and she proceeded. "It is one of my pleasantest duties, I may say, only," she added in an undertone, as if addressing Charlotte, "there are so many persons I meet in

my visits with whom I am diffident about speaking on the subject that interests us most."

"Is it possible?" replied Charlotte, with a slight shade of irony in her tone.

"Yes, Miss Morgan," she said, in a more confidential manner, "I often find it so. Persons of my sensitive nature and conscientious temperament have many struggles in their efforts to do good. I have often wished we had a clergyman who would enter more into the feelings of his people, and would go with me sometimes in my walks of benevolence. A clergyman's wife, too, might do so much in this way! but poor Mrs. Walbridge is so deficient in this respect."

"Perhaps," suggested Charlotte, "she finds many young ladies in the parish who can perform the duties much better than herself, and she refrains on that account."

"Perhaps so," replied Eliza, doubtfully; "but I do think a clergyman's wife should visit the poor."

"Most country minister's wives," said Tom, in a sarcastic tone, "could not perform that duty better than by staying at home. They rarely find many in their parishes that suffer more from stinted means than their own families."

— “But don’t you think, Miss Clarendon,” said Eliza, finding Charlotte did not reply, “that we need a more active clergyman than Dr. Walbridge. Look at the Gorge,—see its spiritual destitution! It really makes my heart ache when I go down there, and find so many who spiritually do not know their right hand from their left.”

“More might be effected there,” said Honora quietly, “by a missionary, perhaps, than by a settled clergyman, with so large a parish as Dr. Walbridge, and so many calls upon his time.”

“Elder Sparks visits there a great deal,” suggested Eliza, “and he says the field is ripe for the harvest. It seems a pity that our Church should not have her share of the reaping.”

“She surely will, Miss Ridgway,” said Charlotte, in a very decided tone, “if her children are faithful to her teachings, and ‘do their duty in that state of life into which it hath pleased God to call them.’”

“Do you know the young clergyman at Ridgeville?” said Eliza, addressing Honora, after a short pause. “Papa says he never saw so busy a man. He is in the factories talking with the operatives, urging the

people to church, visiting everybody, and making himself one with his flock."

"My brother is somewhat acquainted with the Rev. Mr. Clement," replied Honora, "and was delighted with the systematic operations in his parish."

"O yes!" said Eliza, with animation, "Mr. Clarendon, with his zeal and earnestness, would not fail to appreciate these sterling qualities in another."

The company had arrived at Woodland Bluff, and Charlotte, wearied with the conversation more than the walk, determined to remain there for a while. Honora invited them to walk in, but an opportune thunder-cloud, which Miss Morgan carefully pointed out, prevented, and they turned homewards.

"How can you bear this so stoically?" said Charlotte, taking a seat near a window and fanning herself violently. "I am irritated and chafed by that girl's insufferable self-conceit and self-righteousness to such a degree that I am unfit society for any one just now. How can you bear it, Honora?"

"How can I help it, Charlotte? I really pity her."

"Pity her! Don't say that. It makes me more indignant than ever. Pity *her*! Pity poor Dr. Walbridge, who has such a lynx-eyed inspector!"

"Now, really, Charlotte, you are too severe. This girl means well."

"She means well to herself, no doubt," replied Charlotte; "I have no pity for failings like hers."

"And yet," said Honora, gravely, "in the sight of Heaven ours may be the greater faults."

"I sit reprov'd, Honora. I know I am impatient with the faults of others."

"Particularly when they offend your taste," said Honora, as if finishing the sentence for her friend.

"Perhaps so," replied Charlotte, "but tell me, was your calmness real, or were there workings of indignation underneath during the harangue upon Miss Ridgway's goodness and Dr. Walbridge's deficiencies?"

"Probably I should have been more moved than yourself if this had been the first time; but I have sought out palliating circumstances so often, to help Gregory to calmness when he gets outrageous on the subject, that —"

"Then Gregory does get angry about it?" said Charlotte. "I am glad I shall have him to sympathize with me. Excuse me for interrupting, but it is pleasant to know that one upright as Gregory has the same temp-

tations with one's self. But, seriously, Honora, you must tell me the 'palliating circumstances,' that I may not give this lady a piece of my mind, should I be subjected to the same trial again."

"In the first place, then," replied Honora, "she has received no religious training. Her parents belong nowhere religiously, though they attend Elder Sparks's ministrations. The girls came into our parish, I do not know why; but since they came, Elder Sparks has not ceased to flatter Eliza upon her superior sanctity, till she thinks she is a model of what a religious woman — especially, Gregory says, a female member of the 'Protestant Episcopal Church' — ought to be."

"A lump of Attic salt! ha, Honora?" said Charlotte.

"That is like Gregory," replied Miss Clarendon. "I would not repeat all he has said to me, after she has tormented him with her flatteries, and the times he has wished her anywhere but with us. But I cannot feel thus; for though it may seem to us that we were better without such spirits, it is not ours to pick and choose."

"Always right, my dear Honora," said her friend. "I see it all as plainly as you do; and yet, unlike you,

I cannot look upon Miss Eliza Ridgway with a particle of complacency."

The ladies were interrupted in their conversation by the entrance of Colonel Clarendon, with a letter from Gregory. It was hurried and brief, for he was preparing for his graduation. His Roman Catholic friend, Pierre M'Lellan, had been called suddenly home by the death of his father, at the commencement of the term, and therefore the hope that Gregory had expressed to Honora, that he would pass the vacation with him at Woodland, could not be realized. Clarendon, intent upon doing a kindness, had invited a young artist, with whom he had a pleasant acquaintance of some two or three years standing, and who appeared to be without family friends to return with him. This young man, Robert Walton, was somewhat out of health. It had been difficult for Gregory to persuade him to leave his close application to business, even for a few weeks; but at length he had consented, allured by the hope of rest, and the refreshment he always found in the society of Clarendon.

Honora closed the letter with a sensation of relief. She had dreaded the influence of Pierre upon her

brother; of Walton she knew nothing, except that Gregory spoke of him as one whom he highly respected for his firm religious principles.

Colonel Clarendon, an ardent lover of the fine arts, was delighted with the prospect of an artist, who would be able to sketch some of the wild scenery about Rock-ridge.

Aunt Martha (the housekeeper) was disturbed by the idea of receiving so unceremoniously an artist and an invalid. She told several ancient tales of artists who had proved villains, and invalids who had died on people's hands. Honora's repeated assurances that Gregory would not invite any one to his home without a knowledge of their character failed to convince the careful old lady that her fears were groundless.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CRUSHED HEART.

“Upon her face there was the tint of grief,
The settled sorrow of an inward strife,
And an unquiet drooping of the eye,
As if its lid were charged with unshed tears.”

BYRON.

THE NEXT week, while the family at Woodland were making changes in their domestic arrangements to accommodate Clarendon and his friend, Colonel Clarendon was interrupted in advising Honora to give up the little breakfast-room as a studio *pro tem* to the expected artist, by the sharp, spectacled eyes and quaint figure of his neighbor, Mr. Douglass. His countenance betokened restlessness, and the Colonel, who saw at once that he desired a private interview, led the way to the library. It appeared that he had heard, through the last mail, that a large property in Canada had, by some unforeseen event, fallen to Mrs.

Douglass. To obtain a true title to the estate, his presence was necessary there, probably for two months or more, and there was a possibility that he might have to go to Scotland before matters could be settled satisfactorily; and who could he leave in care of his family and estate at Maple Cliff? There was no *head* there. Mrs. Douglass was no more than a child to leave in charge.

"I can't think of any one more suitable than your nephew Chauncey, Agatha's eldest brother," said Colonel Clarendon, after much talk and many plans. "He loves farming and dislikes mercantile life, has no desire to go to California with the family, and you have only to offer him sufficient inducement to secure his services."

The frown grew very dark on Mr. Douglass's brow, as he said, "Yes, and bring the whole troop of my brother's boys and girls in his trail, to be left on my hands while Sidney seeks his fortune!"

"That does not follow," replied the Colonel. "His stay need be but short, and I have an idea your greatest difficulty will be in surmounting the pride that would keep him away, after your gentle hints about Agatha's intercourse with her early friends."

The frown grew a shade less, and after a half-hour the resolution was made, and Chauncey Douglass, with ample offers of remuneration, (for Mr. Douglass, with all his faults, was not niggardly,) was invited to take the charge of affairs at Maple Cliff, during his uncle's absence. Agatha's delight to meet her brother, who came on immediately, was unbounded; for though he always loved to tease her at home, still he was very dear to her. She tried in vain to enlist Popsy in her joyful feelings, but that poor girl was changed. She had grown more taciturn, till now even Agatha could only extract from her an occasional monosyllable. She would sit for hours under the cliffs that overhung the river, looking languidly into the water, apparently lost in dreamy abstraction. She absented herself more and more from the house, and altogether from the Sunday school. Honora in vain endeavored to meet her.

After Mr. Douglass's departure, a cloud seemed lifted from the household, the servants moved more freely, and Agatha, restored to the society of one she had loved from infancy, went running and singing about like a brook when the icy bands of winter are removed. The mistress of the house alone remained unchanged. Her

frightened air and timid step had become habitual to her, through a life of bitter experience. Indifference and hardness would have been the result of her trials on one possessed of native strength and self-dependence; the continual dropping would have changed the nature to stone. But her loving, sensitive, but weak spirit vibrated and trembled still, under the severe discipline to which she was subjected.

When Miss Morgan entered on her life at Maple Cliff, she had been tempted almost to despise Mrs. Douglass for her weakness; but when she came to know her, and witness her daily sufferings, all the pity of her soul was drawn out to her, and she strove to alleviate the sorrows of her life by delicate attentions and acts of consideration. Charlotte could be sympathetic; her heart went out freely in sorrow for the miseries of others; it was a want of tenderness for follies, to which she had no temptation, that gave her a cold, and at times a sarcastic manner. She pitied Mrs. Douglass, and this pity deepened, till it became one of the distinct aims of her life at Maple Cliff to soothe and comfort the mistress of the house. Little by little she had won the confidence of the crushed heart, and learned

that Mrs. Douglass was not indifferent to the high hopes of a future life. Charlotte's firmness and decision were what she needed; by them she was led to the contemplation of her highest duties, and to the prospect of comfort in the performance of them, which would remove the bitterest sting of life. Charlotte was the first and only person to whom she had confided her sufferings, and the effect and fear afterwards, brought on an illness that confined her to her bed several days.

Papsy was her only attendant, and this, with the fact that there was no notice taken of her illness by any of the family, surprised Miss Morgan. There was something mysterious about the matter. Charlotte had sought admittance to Mrs. Douglass's room, but the door was always bolted. Fearing the sufferer was neglected, she determined by stealth to obtain an entrance, and, following Papsy, she opened the door before the girl had time to turn the key. The color deepened on Papsy's yellow skin, and her forefinger was raised in a menacing attitude. Nothing daunted, Miss Morgan approached the chair where Mrs. Douglass sat like a statue, perfectly motionless, though her eyes were opened; but from their depths came no ray

of intellect. Charlotte spoke, but there was no reply, only a vacant stare, and the hand she raised was cold and lifeless.

"What is the meaning of this, Papsy?" said Miss Morgan inquiringly; "what is the matter with Mrs. Douglass?"

The attendant made no answer, but rested her head moodily against the window.

"Has she had attacks like this before?" persevered Charlotte.

Still no answer.

"You must tell me about this Papsy, or I shall surely call in a physician?"

"Better not," was the response.

Miss Morgan felt that she could not leave Mrs. Douglass thus, with such meagre attendance, and be at ease. Chauncey Douglass had not left the library, and, though he was almost a stranger, he was the nominal head of the house, and she would consult him. She found the young man smoking, with Agatha on his knee. He at once removed his cigar, placed a chair, and begged her to be seated. She apologized for the intrusion by saying that something had come to her knowledge in the family that she felt he should inquire into. Under-

standing her look toward Agatha, he said, "We will not send Aggie away if you please. I have always found her trusty." Then speaking more playfully, he added, "We seem to be the rightful heads of the family at present, and if you are of the same mind, we will take this little girl, who has good judgment for her years, into our confidence."

Miss Morgan was glad to escape a *tête-à-tête* conference with the young man, and proceeded to state the case of Mrs. Douglass.

His countenance did not express the surprise she expected, but a look of horror filled Agatha's large eyes.

"I am sorry," replied Chauncey to her recital, "that this unfortunate trouble should have come to your knowledge. My uncle confided to me the secret of my poor aunt's illness, assured me that she had been subject to attacks of partial insanity for years, had been pronounced incurable by the best medical advice, and would be cared for by Papsy, who was accustomed to this duty."

Charlotte was satisfied by this information; and desired more than ever, when Mrs. Douglass should be restored to conscious reason, to relieve a life that must necessarily be a heavy burden.

CHAPTER XIV.

A VISIT TO THE GORGE.

"Fie! fie! unknit that threat'ning unkind brow,
And dart not scornful glances from those eyes;
It blots thy beauty, as frosts bite the meads,
Confounds thy fame, as whirlwinds shake fair buds,
And in no sense is meet or amiable."

SHAKESPEARE.

"**WE** PROPOSE," said Gregory Clarendon to Miss Morgan, as he rose, with his friend Walton, to take leave after a morning call at Maple Cliff, "to spend to-morrow in the Gorge; will you join us? Mr. Walton is to select the finest point from which to sketch a view of the valley; it will take us the best part of the day to look through the wild place, and we will have a pleasant tea-drinking in some of the fastnesses. What say you, Douglass?"

Chauncey was delighted with the proposition, and accepted the invitation at once. Clarendon observed

the doubtful expression on Miss Morgan's face, as she looked toward Agatha, who was carelessly turning over a portfolio of fine engravings, trying to appear uninterested in the result, but evidently impatient to be one of the company for the excursion. Gregory came near the child, and, stooping over her, he said, "Miss Charlotte, I shall take this little one for my companion, so you may put no obstructions in our path." Agatha raised her long lashes to meet his pleasant smile, and they were wet with tears. The engraving she held represented a child in the midst of a wild storm, sheltered under the wing of an angel.

"I don't believe," she said, wiping her eyes, "that I have any guardian angel. Only pleasant, agreeable, gentle children have guardian angels,—children that always do just as they're told, and never have any will of their own, like Anne Walbridge."

"What's the trouble, little one?" he said, playfully stroking her bright curls.

"I want to go to the Gorge," she replied earnestly. "I want to see Mr. Walton sketch; but I know I'm not wanted," she said, looking after Charlotte a little spitefully, as she stepped on to the balcony with the

others of the company, to see the fine views about the house. "Of course I shall not go!" she added, haughtily.

"Well done, my little maiden," said Clarendon. "Pray how old are you?"

"I am in my fifteenth year," she said, drawing herself up to her full height.

"You are really quite a young lady," he replied, smiling at her efforts to make her very small, slender figure appear large in his eyes. "But I have taken you for my special charge to-morrow, as you have heard, if you like to go with such an escort."

The frown passed from Agatha's face; and in a few moments she was conversing freely with her companion. Among other things, they spoke of different places and people at the Gorge, and the little girl displayed a familiarity with that locality that surprised Clarendon.

"Do you go to the Gorge often?" he said gravely.

The child colored, but, reassured by his kind manner, she replied, looking confidently into his face: "Yes, I go there always with Papsy, when we go to walk. Miss Morgan hates Papsy, because her skin is yellow. But she can't help that, you know. Miss Morgan don't like I should go with her, but I do."

"Miss Charlotte does not hate Papsy, my child," replied Gregory; "she naturally wishes to introduce you into more improving society. But is your uncle willing you should go to these places, and among these people?"

"O yes," she added eagerly; "I heard him say there was but a shade of difference between you and Chet."

Gregory colored, but laughed heartily. "I am obliged to your uncle for the compliment. We are both dark, — Chet, however, will bear the palm for beauty. But, Agatha," he said in an undertone, "do you ever hear from Dick Walbridge at the Gorge?"

"O no!" she exclaimed hastily, "that is what troubles Papsy; he promised —" She checked herself, for, in her admiration for Gregory, and her confidential freedom, she had said more than she intended.

"Ah!" said Gregory, and changed the subject, with an inward feeling of regret that her youthful mind should be made the repository of Papsy's peculiar sorrows.

The next day was a hazy July day, not uncomfortably warm; indeed, the wind, as they sailed round the bluff, came down through the Gorge, causing Ho-

nora to draw her shawl about her. Chet plied the oars, while Clarendon stood at the helm. Robert Walton sat near the bow of the tiny vessel, in silence, while Honora, unobserved, watched the variations of his calm, sorrowful face. There was a strange mingling in his countenance. He seemed born with a happy, joyous nature, intensely sensitive, and keenly alive to the beautiful; but some great sorrow had marked him, and the smiles, when they came to his lips, were broken by a look of sadness that went to the heart of the beholder.

There was a fascination about him to Honora; it might be the sympathy of suffering. A great grief had shut up her heart to the influence of any love but that of a friend; but it seemed to her, if she could know his sorrow, she might soothe. He was older than either Gregory or Chauncey, but, unlike them, his figure was slight, and his hands and feet delicate as a girl's. It is meet to say he was beautiful, with his fair, high forehead, shaded with chestnut curls, his soft, deep blue eye, and every feature delicately chiselled; but it was a beauty marked out for the grave. Honora observed an increase of sadness, and sometimes a look

of distress, when Agatha, full of buoyant spirits, ran before him, teasing Clarendon to let her steer the boat.

"Chet, we'll take the lower landing," said Gregory, turning to Chet, whose broad chest and brawny arms worked at the oars.

"Yes, sir," replied he, proudly.

"No one lives in the cottage we used to call the 'Bird's Nest,'" remarked Gregory. "I am of opinion the finest view of the whole valley will be from there. That is the spot," he added, pointing it out to Walton.

The direction which Clarendon indicated was near the lower opening of the Gorge, on the west side. Here, elevated from the bank of the river by the bold bluff on which it stood, backed by a dense evergreen wood, that crowned the bolder bluffs above, peeped out a little cottage. The neglected vines that trailed about the low porch, and the tangled bushes and shrubs before it, told that it was unoccupied.

"What a beautiful spot," said Charlotte. "It is rightly named a 'bird's nest,' so sheltered and surrounded. But why is it unoccupied?"

"I really cannot tell," replied Honora.

"I know," said Agatha, from the other end of the boat. "Papsy told me it was haunted."

Gregory observed Chet bite his lips, and ply the oars more rapidly.

"Yes," continued the child, "she told me it was haunted ever since her mother lived there, and —"

The blood mounted into Chet's face, and there was an impatient movement of his foot. Clarendon drew Agatha's attention, before she could finish the sentence, to a strange-looking fish, and whispered to her not to tell any more of Papsy's stories before Chet.

At the lower landing, the company, with the provisions for the day's comfort, were safely deposited on a green, mossy bank, below the bluff. Chet stood with arms folded in the stern of the boat, awaiting orders.

"We wish to go over to your castle," said Clarendon, "some time during the day; will it be agreeable? and how shall we cross the river?"

"My door is never closed to Mr. Clarendon and his friends," replied Chet. "A whistle from here will bring me to row you across."

"Thank you," said Clarendon, "we value your kindness; but as I am a poor whistler, I will raise this," taking out his handkerchief for a signal.

"This is better," replied Chet, loosing a long, red scarf from about his waist.

Gregory had scarcely taken it, before the man was half-way across the stream.

"A strange mortal!" said Chauncey Douglass, as he watched the powerful strokes that propelled the skiff. "Do tell us his history, Clarendon. It must be a romantic one. By the way, I had my hand on a piece of money for him, but there was something in his looks and manner that restrained me."

"Luckily for you, Douglass," replied Gregory. "If you had offered him money for his friendly services to-day, you would have made him an enemy for life."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Miss Morgan and Chauncey Douglass in a breath. "Pray how does he live?"

"Nobody knows, and nobody better inquire," said Clarendon, looking fixedly into Agatha's great eyes.

"He is very remarkable in his appearance," said Mr. Walton, who was watching Chet as he clambered the rocks, like a goat, on his way to his dwelling. "Such a powerful chest and broad shoulders! He must have the strength of two common men."

"Charlotte thinks he is very handsome," said Honora, smiling.

"Young ladies like anything *foreign*," replied Chauncey, "and he might pass for a Spaniard. He is finer-looking than his sister, though they do not look alike."

"They are not own brother and sister," said Agatha, eagerly; "Papsy told me —"

"Here, you little witch!" said Clarendon, putting his hand over her mouth, "take this basket of cherries for your part of the load, and don't let's hear any more of Papsy's stories to-day."

Agatha was offended; she drew herself up haughtily, and strode on before the company, without touching the basket. Clarendon called after her, telling her he was alone, but she would not reply or turn her head.

"What a volume of pride walks there!" said her brother, — "real Douglass pride!"

"Somebody must help her subdue that spirit," replied Gregory, gravely; "it must be exorcised."

"It is not in the power of man," replied Chauncey; "she will pout and fling for a week to come."

"O not so bad as that," said Clarendon.

"Well, try and see," replied her brother. "I wager my watch that she does not speak decently to an individual for the remainder of the day; if, indeed, she

allows us again to hear the sweet tones of her voice."

Clarendon did not reply, but, stepping behind the company, walked in silence. When they reached the level before the cottage, the young men with their pruning-knives cut away the thick bushes that intercepted the path to the door, and the company were glad to rest under the broad stoop.

CHAPTER XV.

GREGORY AND AGATHA.

“And as this landscape broad, earth, sea, and sky,
All centres in thine eye,
So all God does, if rightly understood,
Shall work thy final good.”

KEBLE.

“O, when she's angry she is keen and shrewd,
And though she be but little, she is fierce.”

SHAKESPEARE.

THE SCENE from the porch of the cottage was peculiar. The sun had climbed so far in his daily course that his beams came down into the valley lighting its dark recesses, while the fleecy clouds scattered their shadows over the masses of ragged rock. Below the cliff on which the cottage rested the river flowed with rapid current, its deep-blue waters sparkling and heaving in the sunlight. The opposite shore was in full view,—steep, almost precipitous, but inhabited, as the smoke which curled lazily up from many a thicket

betokened. Here and there a hut could be seen, but generally they were hidden by massive rocks or a dense growth of hemlock. On the very highest bluff stood Chet's castle. At first you were in doubt whether this were really a dwelling, or only a mass of the rocks which were about everywhere, partially covered with a luxuriant grape-vine. But the regularity of its shape, and the port-holes for windows, but, more than all, the open door and the chimney with its blue wreath, marked it as a human habitation.

"God has made everything very beautiful," said Walton, faintly, as he sunk back exhausted by the walk. Honora poured out a glass of wine and begged him to drink it. He barely touched his lips to the glass.

"Take it Robert," said Clarendon.

The invalid shook his head and placed his hand on his forehead. "It is past now," he said quickly. "I have no need of it."

In a few moments he had recovered himself, and was preparing his utensils for sketching. Clarendon, finding Agatha was nowhere to be seen, went in pursuit of her. Behind the house there had once been

an orchard, and here and there an old apple-tree still spread its gnarled, mossy branches. The tenants of the forest had encroached upon the orchard, and it was now a thicket of half-grown pines and hemlocks among the remaining fruit-trees.

Clarendon would perhaps have failed to find Agatha but for her white dress. She was in the topmost crotch of an old apple-tree, evidently in no conversable mood.

"Ha! Agatha, my child! My runaway!" said Gregory, at the same time climbing the tree. "Is there room for me?"

He did not wait for a reply, but seated himself by her side.

"Agatha," he said, "perhaps I spoke hastily when I reproved you. I am sorry if I hurt your feelings; it was not my intention." He took her hand in his, and she did not withdraw it. He continued: "The reason I spoke to you so abruptly was, that your judgment is not sufficiently matured to tell you how far Papsy's confidences may be agreeable to the ears of ladies and gentlemen. I am very much interested in you, my child, and if I am abrupt in reproving you, will you not put it down to my love for you, and desire for

your welfare?" He looked into her eyes, and they were dimmed with tears.

"I have such a dreadful temper," she said, sobbing. "I get angry at the least thing, and when Miss Morgan scolds me, and Chauncey calls me 'Firebrand,' it only makes me worse. You and Miss Nora speak gently to me, and it goes away, and I feel sorry; but when I get angry at home I am very saucy, and uncle and Miss Morgan shut me in my room whole days; but that don't do me any good, it only makes me madder," she added, her temper evidently rising at the remembrance.

"My dear child," said Clarendon, soothingly, "we all have more or less of this wicked thing to contend with. I have naturally a fearful temper: we can't rid ourselves of it, Agatha, without help."

"I have n't anybody to help me," she replied. "Besides, sometimes I don't wish to be rid of it."

"That thought, dear Agatha," said Clarendon, very sorrowfully, "does not comport with your duty to God or man, as you learn it from the Bible and in the Catechism."

"I don't read the Bible nor learn the Catechism," she said, abruptly.

“Not read the Bible nor learn the Catechism!” he exclaimed with real surprise.

“No,” she replied firmly. “Miss Morgan teases me to study the Catechism; but uncle said I might do as I pleased, and as I am not *baptized*, it did not seem to be the *truth* coming from my lips.”

Gregory was silent a moment; then, taking both her hands in his, he said, very seriously, “Do you ever think that you are quite old enough to make those baptismal vows yourself,—to confess Christ before men? and are you living without learning your duty, because your parents have not fulfilled their duty to you? O Agatha, you will not let it be so! How can you expect Divine help in subduing and governing your temper, if you will not submit yourself to rightful authority. The Church requires her children to study the Bible and learn the Catechism; and though you may say you are not her child, you will not, you dare not say, that you never wish to be one of her children, that you will never come ‘to wash and be clean’?”

The child did not reply to his earnest appeal, but laid her head on his arm and wept.

“We will talk of this again,” he said, looking at his

watch, "but now we must go to the company." Stepping from his seat, he put out his hands to receive Agatha, but she drew back, and shook her head.

"Why not?" said Clarendon. "Come, don't pout: be a good girl and go, because I wish it." He lifted her from her seat with one arm, and sprung to the ground. "Come," he said, soothingly, "give up this pride; come out and make us all happy by your merry laugh."

"I may say something improper," she replied, pursing up her lips and walking slowly. "If I could tell you all I was going to say, then you could tell me whether it was improper."

Clarendon smiled, and bade her keep close to him, and he would talk more with her by and by.

No one apparently noticed the return of Agatha to the company, except Chauncey, who suggested to Charlotte, that "his watch was in danger."

Walton had commenced sketching. Already the lines marking the river, the horizon, and some of the bolder bluffs, were apparent. Agatha came and stood near him, while Honora and Charlotte disappeared, to find a fitting place for their repast.

"What an influence Gregory had upon Agatha," said Charlotte. "Did you notice the expression of her countenance,—how changed, subdued? And she had been weeping."

"Gregory is like our father," replied Honora; "they both have a way of influencing children that is remarkable. I have known my brother, in a most violent fit of passion, when a child, controlled by a single look from his father, and yet he was never severe."

"I wish I had that magnetic power," said Charlotte, with a sigh. "Matters are getting somewhat desperate at Maple Cliff. Miss Agatha obeys only when she chooses. I am glad there is to be a controlling power to fall back upon, for I do not see the end of this violent intimacy with Papsy. To-day's disclosures show the confidential terms on which they stand."

"I see it," replied Honora; "and brother sees it, and regrets it as much as we do."

"How do you account for it in a child of so much pride?" inquired Charlotte.

"I think," replied Miss Clarendon, "she looks upon herself as a sort of champion of Papsy's, which gives her a bit of heroic feeling. Papsy has evidently done

wrong in listening to Dick Walbridge, which must make us all desire to keep Agatha as much as possible from her society. I am persuaded Gregory knows more about it than either of us, and he will seek the best way to break up this intercourse. An abrupt or ill-timed measure would only raise Agatha's determined self-will. Here is a nice place for our repast," added Honora, willing to change the subject, as they came to a broad open space under the shadow of a rock.

"This is very secluded," said Charlotte; "and how cool and refreshing!"

When the time came, a flat rock was spread with a white cloth, and covered with such viands as are usual at an out-of-door lunch.

"I think Aunt Martha did not mean we should return quite sober," said Gregory, as he drew bottle after bottle from the baskets.

"She thinks nothing is too good for you, brother," replied Honora.

"But she knows I seldom take wine, and you never do. It must have been for you, Robert," he said, turning to his friend. "You are getting so much into

Aunt Martha's good graces, that I begin to be jealous of you. But what shall we do with the wine, Nora?"

"We can distribute the bottles among the sick people here in the Gorge; send one to Rosa, who is feeble, one to Aunt Polly, and another to—"

"The Judge," said Gregory, laughing. "I saw the old man sculling up stream awhile ago. I would like you should see him, Chauncey. He is an original peculiar to our Gorge."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE JUDGE.

“Methinks I love all common things,—
The common air, the common flower,
The dear, kind common thought that springs
From hearts that have no other dower,
No other wealth, no other power,
Save love.”

BARRY CORNWALL.

AS THE company finished their repast, and returned to the stoop of the cottage, the tiny skiff of the Judge rounded the point, and approached the lower landing. The party commenced the descent toward the river, and were nearing the landing, when the boat touched the shore. The skiff contained the figure of an old man, whose white hair and beard contrasted strangely with his shining black skin. He was very infirm, as the slow, wearied motion of the oar indicated.

"How are you, Judge?" said Clarendon, stepping forth from the clump of trees that concealed the company, and giving his strong arm to aid the feeble old man in bringing himself safely to land. "How are you to-day?"

"Purty cute, thank ye, Mr. Gregory, 'cept these rhumatis'. I'm thankful for seeing you *all*," he said, nodding to the company, who thought themselves hidden.

"Do you get along comfortably at home, now?" said Gregory, with real interest.

"Why, we jist *stay*, me and my old 'oman," replied the Judge. "You see, I telled the Deacon if he'd let us have the old hut to die in, he's welcome to all arter."

"Is it possible," said Clarendon, indignantly, "that Deacon Dobbin troubles you about that old debt yet?"

"Well, now, Mr. Gregory," said the old man, twisting the immense quid in his mouth, "he come about every day, till I was clean tired out, and tell'd him to take us down south and sell us for what he could get. This made the old feller mad, and I suppose he would ha' turned us out, neck and heels, straightway; but Chet come along just then, and, I tell ye! the old

feller looked as pale as a baby ; for Chet hauled out his pistol and swore he'd shoot him, if he ever caught him there agin on that business."

"Bravo, Chet!" said Clarendon. "I'm glad there's one person the old reprobate is afraid of."

The party had drawn near the old man, and were listening attentively to his conversation, which he garnished with knowing looks out of his one keen black eye, and energetic gestures with his rheumatic body. "Why, they tell'd me," said the Judge, winking at Chauncey, "they tell'd me, Mr. Gregory, that you was going to be a minister. I knowed you'd too much fire for that business. Elder Sparks, now, when he comes into the Gorge, it's like as if you heaped brush, and sot fire to it. All the niggers and white folks, and the rest on 'um, is a screamin' and shoutin', and tearin' round ; and what comes on 't? Why it jist lasts while the Elder is blowing up."

"It is n't well, you think, Judge," said Chauncey, who was enjoying Gregory's embarrassment, "for a clergyman to have too much spirit?"

"In a way, in a way," replied the old man. "Natur' will out in the best on us, sometimes, and there

is n't a nicer man walks than Mr. Gregory," he said, emphatically striking the ground with his crutch.

"Thank you, Judge," replied Clarendon, in a manly tone. "I was hasty in speaking of Deacon Dobbin, though I own to no very good opinion of him."

"He's arter his sort," said the Judge; "very pious Godward, but manward rather twistical."

This remark caused a general smile, but Clarendon, observing that Walton looked at his watch, went for the signal. Agatha insisted upon holding the long staff, after the scarf was fastened to it. It had been raised hardly a moment, when Chet was seen at his cottage door.

"Poor Chet!" soliloquized the Judge, as the ladies remarked on his prompt attention to the signal, "I'm feared he'll come to some end, one o' these days. He's dredful on't now, 'cause he's part nigger blood; but I tells him he ought to be thankful, jest to read how kind Jesus talked to poor old Niggerdimus, and see that niggers is jist as likely to get to the good place as white folks; and arter all there aint nothin' else worth nothin'."

The old man was too much occupied with his own reflections to notice the smile that went round the company at his allusion to Nicodemus. Honora stooped

over the basket to hide her laughter, and Charlotte was just then very busy searching for the bottle of wine for the Judge. Honora gave it into his hand, telling him it was for himself.

“Bless your pretty face, and may you have a handsome —”

Clarendon interrupted the ill-timed blessing, by requesting the Judge to move his boat one side, to make room for Chet.

Clarendon walked with Chet away from the company, while Chauncey and Walton arranged the ladies in the boat. All the persuasions of Honora, and the commands of Miss Morgan and her brother, could not induce Agatha to get into the boat: she would wait for Gregory. Chauncey, a little piqued by her obstinacy, jumped to the shore, and would have carried her in forcibly, but she ran off towards Clarendon, and interrupted the conversation as he said, “Don’t be rash, Chet; matters may not be as bad as you fear. Whatever comes, rely on me as a friend.” Then turning to Agatha, he said affectionately, “Ah, my little miss, what’s the trouble now?”

“Chauncey is angry with me because I would wait for you,” she replied, wilfully.

"Thank you," he replied, taking her hand, as she skipped along by his side, "I must tell your brother you are under my authority for to-day."

"I wish it were for always," she said earnestly, "you are so kind and gentle to me, and don't scold me."

The row across the river was a silent one. The sun had passed the meridian, and the western bluff was in the shade. A soft mist hung about the base, and crept upward among the cliffs and forests, giving a mellowness to the landscape which the morning view had not. The party agreed, after resting from their fatigue, by special invitation, in Chet's domicile, that the view already taken gave a truer picture of the valley than could be obtained elsewhere.

The look of wonder on Walton's face was almost ludicrous, when he beheld the very fair, flaxen-haired girl Chet had taken for his wife looking happy and contented, the master and mistress of the castle evidently very proud each of the other.

The return home was unattended by any misadventure, and the party assembled in the veranda at Woodland Bluff, somewhat fatigued, but delighted with their day's ramble.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LADIES' SEWING SOCIETY.

"A needle which, though it be small and tender,
Yet it is both a maker and a mender,
And for your country's quiet you would like
That womankind should use no other pike.
It will increase their peace, enlarge their store,
To use their tongues less and their needles more,
The needle's sharpness profit yields and pleasure
But sharpness of the tongue bites out of measure."

THE DAY was fixed for the long-talked-of meeting of the "Ladies' Sewing Society," at Mr. Ridgway's. Special invitations had been sent to each member of the families at Woodland Bluff and Maple Cliff, including Agatha. Charlotte, finding her presence there would contribute to the comfort of Honora, who was one of the directors of the society, consented to go, provided they could dispose of Agatha. Much to her surprise, she found the child did not wish to go,

but was looking forward to a ride with Anne Walbridge on the hay-cart. Chauncey Douglass declined the invitation on account of the busy haying season.

There was a very promiscuous assemblage at the Ridgways'. There was Mrs. Dobbin and her five daughters, all grown girls; Elder Sparks, with his wife and pair of twin boys, about three years of age, who employed all Mrs. Sparks's leisure moments in keeping their fingers, sticky with the cakes and candy they were stuffing, from Miss Clarendon's dress. Charlotte unfortunately found an uneasy seat between Miss Eliza Ridgway and Mrs. Dobbin. Eliza's attention was absorbed in watching her mother, correcting her mistakes in grammar, and now and then hitting her elbow, and saying, "Don't, ma!" as Mrs. Ridgway related some of her daughter Eliza's pious performances. No sooner, however, did Mrs. Dobbin find herself with an auditor, than she broke out in a shrill voice, twisting her straight little neck, and bobbing her head about toward Charlotte.

"Now, Miss Morgan, I'm one of them sort as al'ays speaks my mind, and I want to know if you have any idee how much that nigger of Mr. Douglass's and that

little girl you have the care of are together? There ain't a day passes but I see 'um going round the corner, down to the Gorge, as lovin' as sisters. I would n't let my girls run round so, I know. I'm favorable to niggers, but I don't want 'um nigh me, or to make company on 'um."

Charlotte paused a moment, and then replied coldly, "Mr. Douglass does not object."

"Very like," replied Mrs. Dobbin, with a sneer. "There was a time, when the Deacon and I both thought well of Papsy; we counted on her and Dick Walbridge as Elder Sparks's converts."

"Perhaps they were," said Charlotte, a little ironically.

"No," replied the sharp-voiced woman, "they never *came out*! My Ann 'Tilda did though. There's Ann 'Tilda," she added, pointing to a girl of twenty, who sat with her mouth and eyes wide open, staring at Honora, who had entered into conversation with the mother of the twins, about measles, whooping-cough, &c. Charlotte noticed this interesting representative of the Dobbin family, in hopes thereby to change the current of the conversation; but the indefatigable Mrs. Dobbin soon returned to "speakin' her mind."

"You know I s'pose," she said, with an attempt to whisper which seemed to make the shrillness of her voice more apparent, "that Mr. Douglass aint thought much of about here. He treats his wife like a dog; and it is well known—"

"Excuse me, Mrs. Dobbin," said Miss Morgan, rising with dignity, "I would rather not hear about Mr. Douglass."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobbin to Eliza Ridgway, as Charlotte walked across the room. "How proud everybody is that has anything to do with them Douglasses!"

Charlotte, in the midst of self-gratulation at having escaped Mrs. Dobbin, saw Elder Sparks rise and bring his chair near hers. She blushed painfully, but the Elder introduced himself, by saying, "I make it a point to know everybody."

"How delightful is this meeting!" he said, after duly wiping his nose, and spreading his hands on his knees. "*Unity*, unity among Christians, after all, is the *sine qua non*. You go to Brother Walbridge's meetin'?" he added inquiringly.

"I am a member of the Episcopal Church," replied Charlotte, with freezing coldness.

"Well, I may say I've nothing against Episcopalians, except their want of charity for us, and to that there are noble exceptions. Now, here's Miss Eliza Ridgway; I may say, I love her like one of my own converts. She is so humble-minded and devoted!"

"Indeed!" said Charlotte.

"Yes," resumed the Elder, "she tells me, she believes exactly as I do, and approves of all my measures."

Charlotte could not resist the desire to say, "I wonder at her leaving you."

"O, you are a little more *genteel*," he replied, with a smirk that was very disgusting to Charlotte's taste; but she forced herself to say, "That is hardly a worthy motive for a Christian to act upon in so important a step."

"She is young, you know, Miss Morgan," said the Elder, in a confidential whisper; "and where there is a young clergyman in the question, one can hardly blame her."

This speech was accompanied with another smirk, and Charlotte, thoroughly disgusted, escaped as soon as possible, and took a seat near Honora, who was in the midst of an earnest conversation with her next neighbor about the mysteries of cooking.

Towards the latter end of the afternoon, Dr. Walbridge came in, accompanied by the young clergyman from Ridgeville. The Misses Ridgway were earnest to introduce the stranger to everybody, but at the first pause the Rev. Mr. Clement came towards Honora, and, extending his hand, said in a kind, cordial tone, "I am happy to see you, Miss Clarendon, for, though we have met but once, I do not feel as a stranger, having so often seen your brother." It was very pleasant to Honora to meet one of whom she had heard so much good. "I came up," he said, after greeting Miss Morgan, to whom Honora introduced him, "to visit the Gorge with Dr. Walbridge."

"You find much to be done there," said Honora gently.

"Yes, a work that has been too long neglected. Dr. Walbridge's health is feeble, and his parish large. He wishes me to undertake this part of his parochial duties for him at present, and, with the help of you ladies," he added, looking at Charlotte and Honora, "I shall hope something may be done for this wild place. The Doctor referred me to you, Miss Clarendon, for many particulars of the inhabitants, with whom he said you were better acquainted than himself."

Honora blushed, and replied, modestly, "I have often visited these poor people, but I think you will find Chet a useful auxiliary if —" she hesitated, "if you take him in his way."

"Chet," replied the clergyman, musingly, — "I have often met him in the lower village with game, but could never prevail upon him to enter into conversation with me. May I inquire, Miss Clarendon, what is *his way*?"

"My brother can tell you better than I," said Honora, smilingly; "they have been firm friends from boyhood."

"If he is a friend of Mr. Clarendon's, I must find the way to make him mine," replied he warmly. "Is that mulatto girl that is passing," he added, looking into the street, "one of the inhabitants of the Gorge?"

Honora and Charlotte instinctively turned to the window; down the way came Papsy, accompanied by Agatha. The child was dressed in a white muslin robe, her gypsy hat, trimmed with fresh hop-vines, hung lightly over her neck. Her face was flushed, and she was in earnest conversation with her colored friend, as she skipped along by her side, unable, in an ordinary walk, to keep up with Papsy's long strides.

"That is Chet's sister," replied Honora; who recovered herself before Charlotte from her surprise, at seeing the child, whom she had supposed making hay with her brother, evidently on the way to the Gorge with Papsy. Tea was announced before Miss Morgan could recover from her bewilderment; and for the remainder of the evening, though Gregory and Mr. Walton came down, and music was introduced as an entertainment, Charlotte's thoughts were elsewhere. She could not rid herself of a painful sense of neglect of duty, and, when Gregory rallied her on her very long face, there was no answering smile or reply.

"What troubles Charlotte?" whispered Gregory to his sister.

"Agatha has gone by on her way to the Gorge with Papsy, and she is grieved because she was not at home to prevent it," replied Honora.

Clarendon bit his lip, but said nothing. From that moment he too lost his vivacity, and seemed anxious to have the evening come to an end. He caught himself several times, while Miss Eliza was entertaining him with an account of her "sensitive feelings" and "peculiar position," thinking of something else, and

obliged to reply indefinitely, or not at all. At length the meeting was closed with prayer, the Rev. Mr. Clement leading the devotions of the people. His voice and manner were very effective; so much so, as to cause Mrs. Dobbin to say to Mrs. Sparks, that "she was glad to hear one of them Church folks that could pray from the heart. How different from those book-prayers they generally read!" Charlotte was amused, even amid her concern for Agatha. The prayers had been the form for Evening Family Devotions, with which every Churchman is familiar.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WORK.

"*Labor is glory.* The flying cloud lightens,
Only the passing wing changes and brightens,
Idle heart only the dark future frightens,
Play the sweet keys wouldst thou keep them in tune."

MRS. OSGOOD.

THE CLEAR, hot July days had passed into the hazy, sultry hours of August. The five weeks of Robert Walton's stay at Woodland Bluff were gone like a dream. His health had improved, and there seemed perhaps a shade less of sadness on his finely chiselled face. He had won the hearts of the family so completely, that they had obtained a promise for the Christmas holidays, when he would see Rockridge and the Gorge in their glittering winter robes. He had taken sketches from many of Colonel Clarendon's favorite points, and finished the painting of the first view of the Gorge. Aunt Martha had become satisfied that

artists might be honest men; and she had petted Robert, to the great amusement of Gregory, with the hot drinks and herb teas she had long offered in vain to her nephew. She was much concerned because she had not been able to discover what the young man "had on his mind." Even to Gregory he had never spoken of parents or home; and there was something that made the most curious diffident about questioning him. The family knew nothing of his history when he left Woodland Bluff, except that Aunt Martha had made the discovery that he had once had a mother, from an English Prayer-Book in his possession, in which was written, "From my Mother." Colonel Clarendon had half resolved, in his hours of familiar intercourse, to ask of his parentage; but he was gone before the Colonel, with all his bravery, could attack the citadel of Walton's reserve on this point.

There was an important work going on at the Gorge, through the influence of Mr. Clement. Gregory and Walton were warmly enlisted in it. A regular Sunday service had been established there, and was well attended. Mr. Clement had taken Chet in "*his way*," and was on friendly terms with the "lord of the

Gorge," and by his help obtained admittance into all the huts and hovels in the region. The Sunday school in the dilapidated school-house had passed into Gregory's hands, and this, with the assistance he could render Dr. Walbridge, whose health grew every day more feeble, occupied most of his leisure hours. He had spoken to Honora of the doubts that had haunted him the previous year; and once, in the presence of Mr. Clement, he wondered where they had vanished.

"You have gone to work," replied the clergyman, smiling. "There is nothing like *work*, work in the Church, to settle one's mind. What you needed was active employment for your religious energies. The old lines are true of the mind and soul, as of the body:—

'Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.'

Young men in college are not particularly active in doing good. Now, Clarendon, if you make up your mind to enter the Seminary, *work*. There is work enough everywhere. Visit the poor and sick; have your class in Sunday school; seek out objects of benevolence. Don't spend your little leisure in dogmatical discus-

sions, but in active service; take hold with your earnestness in behalf of the suffering, the ignorant, the fallen, and I think I can assure you, doubts will be like 'the morning cloud and early dew.'"

Gregory had made many an effort to enlist Chauncey Douglass in the good work. Since this young man had come to Rockridge, he had witnessed intimately, for the first time, life guided, governed, and controlled by earnest, abiding faith in Christ, manifesting itself by works of love. Religion had hitherto been something with which he had nothing particular to do. Now he looked on while Mr. Clement, Clarendon, and Walton, like himself young men, in all their acts referred to a responsibility above and beyond anything earthly; and he wondered why he had never felt what was their life. Several long talks with Miss Morgan ended in making him very dissatisfied with his wholly worldly existence, and gave him indefinite longings for something better.

Charlotte continued her efforts in behalf of poor Mrs. Douglass. After the severe illness we have mentioned in a previous chapter, she returned to her daily round of duties, as if nothing had happened. Miss

Morgan endeavored to interest her in the new efforts that were making for the good of the community, but the heart that might have overflowed with benevolence was crushed with its own heavy sorrows. Dr. Walbridge had welcomed the suffering soul to the Lord's Table, and from that time she became a child indeed, bending submissively beneath her overwhelming load of grief, but looking forward with hope and trust to that time, so soon to come, when all tears should be wiped from her eyes.

The family had occasional intelligence from Mr. Douglass;—letters to Agatha, descriptive of the gay life he was leading, and minute directions to Chauncey about farming operations; but seldom a line to denote that he remembered that there was one whom he had promised "to love and cherish." He anticipated a voyage to Scotland ere the estate could be fully settled, but he should return to Maple Cliff before he went abroad. Now and then he inquired for Papsy, as one might ask after a pet cur, and always cautioned Chauncey about interfering with her strange ways, so long as she was not troublesome. She crossed the path of the young man but seldom; nevertheless, he

began to look upon her with suspicion, and united his efforts with Miss Morgan to prevent the intimacy between her and his sister.

He had once or twice, by force, hindered Agatha from walking out with Papsy after nightfall. These forcible measures excited the indignation of the child, and often led to open warfare in the family.

CHAPTER XIX.

WARNING.

“The plain good man, whose actions teach
More virtue than a sect can preach,
Pursues his course unsagely blest,
His tutor whispering in his breast;
Nor could he act a purer part,
Though he had Tully all by heart.
And when he drops the tear on woe,
He little knows, or cares to know,
That Epictetus blamed that tear,
By Heaven approved, to Virtue dear.”

MOORE.

ONE EXCEEDINGLY hot afternoon, toward the latter end of August, Colonel Clarendon and his family had assembled in the north veranda at Woodland Bluff. Gregory was amusing his father and sister with a graphic account of his experience as a Freshman, when suddenly Colonel Clarendon pointed toward Maple Cliff.

“Look there,” he said; “that child Agathia running

in this broiling sun, and without a bonnet! She is coming here."

Gregory took up his broad Panama, and went down the steps, saying, "There must be something wrong at Maple Cliff; I will go and meet her."

The long avenue, shaded with lindens and horse-chestnuts, that led to the residence of the Clarendons, was a gradual descent, winding toward the road, and Gregory was soon in its shadow. He met the child near the entrance-gate, heated with running, and panting for breath. He gently drew her to a seat under the broad shade of a clump of hemlocks.

"I got away," she exclaimed, hastily, her face flushed with anger, and her whole frame quivering, "and I'll not go back," she added, catching her breath.

"Don't try to talk, darling, till you get your breath," said Gregory, soothingly, stroking her tangled curls, "and then you shall tell me all."

She rested but a moment, then, jumping from her seat by his side, her face crimson with passion, and stamping with her little foot, she exclaimed, "I will go! That hateful Miss Morgan has no right to prevent me,—neither has Chauncey! I will go to the

Gorge with Papsy to-night. I promised her, and they shall not keep me. If I would have told a lie, as Papsy wished me, I could have gone without their knowing."

Gregory took both her hot hands in his, and, looking mournfully into her angry eyes, he said, "Agatha, you and I have sad tempers to control. I have been as violent as you are now, many times in my life, but sorrow always followed, even if I obtained what I wanted."

He spoke sadly, and there was such a depth of sympathy in his voice and manner, that the child sunk sobbing into her seat.

"Agatha," he said, after she had wept some time in silence, "do you think Miss Morgan or your brother can have anything but your good at heart, when they refuse you this walk with Papsy?"

The demon was roused instantly. "Yes," she replied angrily; "they do it to tease me, and Miss Morgan likes to show her authority, but I'll —"

Gregory turned away sorrowfully, saying, "If you never mean to submit to rightful authority, I can do nothing for you."

"But I will submit to Cousin Nora and you," she replied, weeping bitterly, "for you speak kind and gentle to me."

"But my authority is only self-constituted, and you are not bound to submit to it; while Miss Morgan is your teacher, placed over you in the Providence of God, and it is your duty to yield to her,—more especially in the absence of your uncle."

The child continued to sob in silence.

"Furthermore, Agatha," he continued, drawing her towards him, "if you wish me to continue my charge over you, my commands would agree with those of Miss Morgan. I should say, by no means go to the Gorge with Papsy to-night."

"Poor Papsy," said the child. "It is too true, as she says, nobody cares for her but Agatha."

"That is not true," said Gregory, decidedly. "Think how my sister has striven for her good, and — You don't know, Agatha, all that has been done for her, nor why she is wholly an unfit companion for you. She is wilful and disobedient, and I am afraid a life of suffering is before her." After a moment's pause, he continued. "I hear of you often at the Gorge after

nightfall. Will you tell me where you go, and whom you meet?"

The little girl turned away from his gaze.

"You are truth itself, my child," he added; "and I see at once you are in no proper company."

The young man arose, and walked, back and forth, the shady path where they were, leaving Agatha in the garden chair. He was determined that this meeting in the Gorge should not take place; but decision must be mingled with gentleness, if he would carry out his determination. Presently he came back to his seat, and, taking the child's hand, he said affectionately, "Agatha, you are a pet of mine; we all love you very much at Woodland; now would you rather keep Papsy and her company, whoever it is, at the Gorge, or the love and esteem of us at Woodland?"

She hid her face on his shoulder.

"Now, my child, one question more. I give you my word that no one shall know of what you tell me; but look me in the face and say, does Papsy communicate through you with Dick Walbridge?"

A deep blush dyed Agatha's face, neck, and arms, though she did not look up.

"Enough," said Clarendon; "you have not spoken, but it is quite as well. Now, I will tell you what I know of Dick. He is a notoriously bad man, and seeks Papsy's ruin; and I cannot—I cannot have you in any way associated with them."

"I do not think Papsy meant harm to me," said Agatha, looking up into his face for the first time; "she was afraid to go to the Bird's Nest alone, because it is haunted, and besides she could not read the letters herself."

"Letters! ah!" said Clarendon in a tone of surprise. "Does Dick wish her to follow him? How many have there been?"

"Three," replied the child, reluctantly, "and there will be another to-night, and I promised I would go with her, and read it for her."

"No, Agatha," he said determinedly, "if you value my friendship, you will renounce this scheme. If you knew the pleasure it will give Miss Nora and me, to see you an obedient little girl, I am persuaded you would give up this intimacy with Papsy."

"But I promised to go to-night," she replied timidly.

"That promise you have no right to keep. You

promised to do wrong ignorantly, and your obligations to your Maker, now you know it is wrong, require you to break it. Promise me," he said gently, — "promise me that you will not go."

She promised, half reluctantly.

"You have done so much for me," he continued, "that I will promise to do what I can for Papsy, and will now go with you to Maple Cliff and make your apologies to Miss Morgan."

Agatha drew back a little, but his soothing manner prevailed, and they went out the gate together.

"Where is Gregory, all this time?" said the Colonel to his daughter, as she arose to go into the house.

"I think he must be in the shrubbery with Agatha," replied Honora.

"Yes, I'll be bound," he said, "she is in some pet, and he is endeavoring to soothe her. You see, daughter, it is as I said with this child and her teacher. An alkali and an acid cannot mix without effervescence. There they go," he added, as Gregory and Agatha appeared ascending the road to Maple Cliff. "The little minx! how small she is!"

"She is scarcely above Gregory's elbow," replied Honora.

That evening, Gregory Clarendon took his way to the Gorge. His promise to Agatha to do what he could for Papsy, and his own desire to do right, impelled him on the errand he had undertaken. Had Mr. Douglass senior been at home, he would have gone at once to him with his suspicions, but now it would be better to act alone. The thought occurred to him that he was placing himself in an awkward predicament. What a nice bit of scandal, should it come to the ears of Mrs. Dobbin and Company, that the immaculate young Clarendon went down to the Gorge to meet Papsy. But the brave heart was nerved with a sense of right. As he came near the cottage, he saw a dusky form skulking around the corner of the house. He approached, and said in a tone of authority, "Papsy, are you alone?"

She did not reply, but stepped forth from the shadow of the trees and confronted him with folded arms and downcast eyes.

"I have come to you," said Clarendon earnestly, "as a friend, to warn you for the last time of the wicked designs of Dick Walbridge. He seeks only to make you as bad as himself,—to make you a companion for the vicious."

"Go, Mr. Gregory," she said, in a low tone, waving her hand; "useless, — useless!"

"No, Papsy," he replied; "remember the wrongs and sufferings of your mother. Let her warning voice be heard. Come away from the spot. Come to Woodland, and Miss Nora and I will find you a shelter where you may live and be virtuous."

"Papsy's virtue," she replied bitterly; "who believes in it? who cares for it? Whites tread on her! Blacks won't trust her! Despised of all! No, Mr. Gregory, go, — useless, — useless!"

"Papsy," said Clarendon, "what you have said is not true. Your brother would save you from ruin if you would let him."

"Yes, to slave to his white chickens," she replied quickly.

"Once more," said Gregory, solemnly pointing upward; "you are perilling your immortal soul. Remember, no unclean thing can enter there."

CHAPTER XX.

THE PRODIGAL.

"But when we in our viciousness grow hard,
(O, misery on't!) the wise gods seal our eyes;
In our own filth drop our clear judgments, make us
Adore our errors."

SHAKESPEARE.

"And yearns not her paternal heart
To hear *their* secret sighs,
Upon whose doubting way apart
Bewildering shadows rise."

KEBLE.

FROM THE first wanderings of Richard Walbridge from his father's roof, Papsy had been the medium of communication between himself and his mother. This brought them often together in intimate and familiar intercourse. Many a wild winter night had the child Papsy led Richard to a place of shelter, when but for her, intoxicated as he was, he might have perished in the storm. The fall of this young man, from the comparative innocence of his boyhood, to the

life he was leading when first introduced to our readers, had been very gradual. It cost him many a bitter struggle, and many a secret tear, to trample under foot all the teachings of his childhood. How mercifully the path of the Christian child is hedged about, so that he that would break down the barriers that separate him from the world must crush out some of the warmest instincts of his nature, defy the grace given him in baptism, and quench the spirit of love, that strives ever with him.

The home of Chet had been open to Richard till the brother mistrusted his intercourse with his sister; then the mixed blood boiled in his veins, and something terrible would have ensued; but Richard, knowing he was no match for Chet in physical strength, had taken himself out of the way. Chet had threatened Papsy with his utmost vengeance, if she did not at once and forever spurn Walbridge from her sight; but she, his equal in deadly passion, had taunted him with his own white wife, and asked by what right he interfered.

When Honora Clarendon sought out Richard, the young man was glad of the means to escape the wrath

of Chet, which he knew must come upon him in the end.

Papsy had often obtained money for him, in small sums, to pay his gambling debts and give him means of further dissipation;—but she had never brought enough to carry him far out of that region. With the means Miss Clarendon procured, he could begone. The heart of a man was in his bosom, and the wailings of Papsy, when she discovered his purpose, smote him with a bitter pang. The stings of conscience, that told him that he had done a wrong that a lifetime of repentance could never repair, were quieted only by the intoxicating cup.

Between the Gorge and the lower village there was a low tavern, the bane of all the good, a perfect nest of wickedness. This had latterly been the home of Walbridge, and here he had prepared himself, soul and body, for the life he afterwards led. When he parted from Papsy, he had torn her clinging arms from about his neck, promising to write often, and soon to send for her. In these promises, the poor down-trodden girl trusted. Snubb, the idiotic stable-boy at the tavern, was appointed to convey Dick's letters to Papsy. Few

had they been ; but to her like the far-off sail to the shipwrecked mariner.

Agatha had often wondered in her own mind, why Richard Walbridge, with his education, was not able to *spell*. Neither she nor Papsy guessed that he was deceiving her even then. The letters were written by one of his low companions, and despatched regularly to the place appointed.

The temptations of New York caught the young rover in their clutches, and before Walbridge had been two weeks from Rockridge, every penny of the money that had been procured for him with so much care was squandered. The last year or two of his life had fitted him for low company, and he soon found his level. There was plenty of occupation in the gambling saloons, and it was not long before he was initiated into the mysteries of a large class of society in cities, who get their living by drawing others into the same net in which they have been caught. After a few months, Dick found it convenient to assume a disguise, he having been very nearly discovered by a merchant from Rockridge. He colored his very fair skin a deep olive, and blackened his eyebrows and the light brown

waves of his hair. To this disguise of person he added a new name, and was known among his associates as Dan Washington. Having thus fairly plunged into the vortex of sin, he fast ripened into a thorough rogue.

When souls nurtured in the bosom of the Church throw off the bands of righteous restraint, and yield their powers servants of sin, they plunge to greater excess, and are found bolder in wickedness than those who have sinned against no such grace, and broken no solemn vows. Richard had talents and perseverance, but they had not been put to any proper use. The excitement of getting his living by his wits called them forth, and his ingenious and brilliant schemes for making money without labor were the admiration of his companions. These schemes were continual, for an unoccupied, solitary moment rung in his soul the knell of departed goodness, purity, and worth.

In the mean time there were few in Rockridge, except the dark-browed girl whom he had ruined, and his parents, who mourned for him, or thought of him. To his little sister he had ever been like some far off object, that she might look at, but could never approach.

The end of Agatha's first year at Maple Cliff was drawing to a close. To say she had changed in that time, would be to say only what is true of every girl at her age. She had gained a little in size, and her manners had acquired a less childish tone. But her independence and wilfulness, though not so apparent, were unsubdued. She still questioned and cavilled at every point of disagreeable duty, and at every doctrine she could not comprehend. Often she proposed questions to Miss Morgan, which that lady, in her well-defined, unquestioning faith, found difficult to answer. Charlotte had no charity for her doubts, and would not reply to her cavils. Yet they were *real* doubts, and the child would have been strengthened in her unbelief, and settled in her habit of questioning, if she had not been blest with the confidence of one who had himself known difficulties, and felt the temptation to doubt. To Gregory therefore she went, straightway, with all questions, whether moral or religious; and he and Honora, from whom she had no reserves, often wondered at the depth of her thoughts.

"It is a critical time with that child, sister," said Gregory, after a return from a walk with Agatha,

where she had been questioning him on the doctrines of the Catechism, which, by his request, she was diligently studying, settling in her own mind, as she proceeded, *how much* she should *believe*. "It is a critical time with her, Honora. She will never give her affections to any faith till her intellect assents, and with her pride it will be difficult to convince her of the depravity of man and his utter helplessness without Divine aid, and —" He paused.

Honora looked up from her work, and replied:—

"'T is He that works to will,
'T is He that works to do.'

And we must pray and work for her, dear brother, trusting in that grace which is vouchsafed to those who call for it by diligent prayer."

"Yes," said Gregory, thoughtfully; "but I wish Charlotte's influence was a little different. She is a nice girl,—intellectual, lady-like, conscientious, and devout; but there is something wanting. Agatha respects her, without caring a fig for her opinion. You must have an eye to the child's reading this winter;—she has a perfect mania in that line, and you know the library at Maple Cliff has lately had an addition of

many modern infidel writers, full of subtle poison. I have warned Agatha of the effect of such reading, and asked her to consult you about books; and she has promised to write to me while I am away. I don't know," he added, "why I feel such an interest in this child, except that she is uncommonly interesting herself as a study."

CHAPTER XXI.

PAPSY AN OUTCAST.

"Think gently of the erring;
O, do not thou forget,
However darkly stained by sin,
He is thy brother yet!
Heir of the self-same heritage,
Child of the self-same God,
He hath but stumbled in the path
Thou hast in weakness trod."

"If they who hate the trespass most,
Yet, when all other love is lost,
Love the poor sinner, marvel not, —
Christ's mark outwears the rankest blot."

KEBLE.

THE YELLOW leaves of autumn had appeared, and yet Gregory Clarendon still lingered at Woodland Bluff. His natural diffidence to seek the clerical profession had given way to the urgent wishes of his father and the gentle solicitations of his sister. He would have left home for the Theological Semi-

nary early in the autumn, but for the dangerous illness of his father. His parent had now nearly recovered his usual health, and in two days Gregory was to take his departure for New York. Mr. Douglass the elder had been at Maple Cliff the last week, and was preparing for his departure to Scotland.

Honora was enjoying a quiet evening with her brother, after the Colonel had retired, when suddenly the door of the library was opened, and Chauncey Douglass entered, with Miss Morgan and Agatha. The tearful eyes of the child drew the attention of Clarendon as he stooped to greet her. "Eyes wet with tears!" he said; "why is this?"

The tone and manner overcame Agatha's forced composure, and she sobbed violently. Clarendon looked to her companions for an explanation.

"It is her sorrow for her yellow friend," said Chauncey. "You know, I suppose, that my uncle has driven the —— has turned Papsy out of doors." Seeing the astonishment of the Clarendons at this announcement, he added: "It was high time, for the credit of the family, she should leave. Had my authority extended to her, she would have gone long ago."

Agatha did not reply angrily to her brother's remarks, as Gregory feared she would, but whispered between her sobs, "But he has turned her into the street, and Chet has forbidden her to come there, and she has been out two of these cold nights, without anybody to care for her."

"Is this so, Charlotte?" said Honora, whose quick ear had heard the sad tale.

"I do not know to the contrary," replied Miss Morgan. "I know that Mr. Douglass and Chet have closed their doors against her."

"Gregory," said Honora, going to the hall for her overshoes, "this must not be! A place of shelter must be found for the poor girl."

"To-night, sister?" he replied, going towards her. "It is late and quite dark; you will hardly find her to-night. I would not go till morning?"

"It is not like you, brother, to say that," she said, putting back the black locks that shaded his brow. "Could I sleep quietly, and know that a human being, a woman,—a child, I may say,—was near me without a covering for her head? No, Gregory, you may go with me, but I shall go."

"Dear, dear, gentle, good, sweet cousin Nora!" exclaimed Agatha, clasping her arms about Honora's neck. "How I wish I could go with you, but uncle has forbidden me ever to do anything again for poor Papsy."

"Honora," said Charlotte, going towards her as she prepared herself for the walk; "do you really mean to go? To-night?"

Honora looked at her friend with a slight shade of displeasure, as she said, "Charlotte, are you a woman, and ask me that question?"

"But do you know," replied Charlotte, in a whisper, "how she has conducted,—what disgrace she has brought upon the family? She really deserves to suffer a while for her sin?"

"Deserves to suffer, Charlotte!" said Honora, sorrowfully. "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone!"

"Dear Honora," said Charlotte, while tears stood in her eyes for the uncharitable word, "I was hasty,—very hasty. I will not ask you to stay. Let me go with you."

"No, Miss Charlotte," said Chauncey Douglass, who

overheard the last remark; "you must not go. If these foolish people wish to put themselves to inconvenience for this —" A look from Clarendon checked him; but after an instant he added, "I know my uncle so well, that I assure you disobedience to his peremptory commands, in any member of the family, would bar the doors against that person forever; and he swore by all that is sacred —"

"You are right, Chauncey," said Clarendon, interrupting the young man, who was getting somewhat excited. "You and Miss Morgan and this little girl," he added, patting Agatha's head, "may not go. Mr. Douglass would never forgive you. Honora and I can do very well; indeed, I think I may go alone."

"No, brother," said Honora, who had busied herself in putting up articles of comfort for the sufferer, "this is not an errand for you to do alone."

Charlotte's uncharitable thought, and the remembrance of her unforgiving example, were causing her bitter anguish, and she was forbidden to do anything to relieve the poor girl.

The moon had not risen when Clarendon and his sister went on their errand of mercy. Hazy clouds obscured the stars, and it was beginning to rain.

"Does this strike you, brother, as it does me?" said Honora, as they went rapidly along. "I feel such a sense of injustice for Papsy."

"Yes, I understand," said Gregory, holding tightly the little arm that trembled in his. "If this were a white girl, or a black girl, she would find friends somewhere; but cursed as she is with a mixed blood, she is left without a shelter. Is that what you would say?"

"Partly, brother," she replied hesitatingly. "Poor Papsy! so young! She is but seventeen. It does seem intensely cruel in Mr. Douglass to cast her off thus, when he has left her to run wild all her life?"

"*Cruel!*" replied her brother; "in this case his conduct is fiendish!"

"Don't you think we can persuade Chet to take her in?" she asked after a long pause.

"If I can prevent his putting an end to Dick Walbridge the first opportunity, it is all I can hope from Chet. If Dick should cross his path, I would not insure his life for a moment."

"But Dick will not come to Rockridge," said Honora. "Why then shouldn't Chet take in Papsy?"

"Rosa would object," replied her brother. "Perhaps we may get her in with Aunt Polly, if I can induce Chet to look at the matter a little calmly."

"I think we shall find her at the Bird's Nest," said Honora; "and we can go over in the Judge's skiff. It is moored about here."

"Perhaps I had better run up and ask the Judge for Papsy, before we cross the river," said Clarendon.

Honora waited on the brink of the stream while her brother went to the hut. He found the Judge about to close up his accounts for the night, in his red-flannel cap.

"Do you know where Papsy is, Judge?" said Clarendon, as the occupant of the hut slowly opened the rickety door.

"Lor' bless you, Mr. Gregory," he replied, "you eenermost scared the life out on me. Well, now, you see, Papsy came over here, to-day is two days, and me and my old 'oman would ha' taken her in just like that," he said, snapping his fingers, "only the Deacon came down and said, if we harbored such varmint, he'd turn us out neck and heels."

"Can you tell me, Judge, where she is now? My sister and I have come down to find her a shelter."

"Well, now," replied the Judge, "my old 'oman see'd her just at daylightin' down over yonder," — pointing to the Bird's Nest. Gregory ran down the bank, unmoored the boat, and struck out into the river. The old man stood peering out into the darkness for a moment, then, closing the door, he muttered, "The good Lord does give us some kind critters."

As Clarendon and his sister came near the cottage, they discerned a figure prostrate in the stoop.

"Stay here, brother; let me go to her," said Honora, gently loosing her arm from his. She came and bent over the prostrate form. "Papsy," she whispered; but there was no sound, and the hand she raised fell lifeless by her side.

Gregory raised the head till it rested in Honora's lap. "Exposure to hunger and cold!" he said, mournfully. His sister's tears fell fast, as she strove to pour wine between the closed lips of the miserable girl.

"What shall we do?" said Gregory. The tone was unusually despairing for his resolute nature.

"My brother," said Honora, "go to Chet, reason with him, plead with him. He must hear you. Go, brother!"

"And leave you here?" questioned Gregory.

"Yes," she replied, "I am not afraid. Of what should I be afraid?"

He hesitated; then, taking off his cloak, he wrapped it about his sister, saying, "I can keep warm walking, but you, my brave girl, may chance to take cold, sitting in this chilly night 'air."

In a few moments the door of Chet's castle was opened to Gregory by the master of the house; Clarendon beckoned to him, and they walked out.

"I have come," said Gregory, pausing on the brow of the cliff, "to plead for Papsy. Remember your mother, Chet, and let us go together and bring this poor homeless girl to a place of shelter."

"Mr. Gregory," replied Chet, "my mother suffered for her sin. Papsy has chosen the same course. Let her take her choice. I warned her, I threatened her, but she only taunted me;—and the white villain," he said, laying his hand on the pistol he always carried, "I swear shall know my vengeance!"

"Stay," said Gregory, putting his finger on his arm, "don't make rash vows. Let us not think of the injurer, but the injured. I ask it as a personal favor to me and my sister, who is waiting in the valley be-

low, watching over Papsy, who lies in an insensible state; I ask it as a proof of your friendship for us, that you will come and help us find a roof to shelter this friendless girl. She has done very wrong, I grant, Chet; but if Miss Nora forgives her, and seeks to help her, should you and I be bitter against her?"

The appeal was felt. Chet's hand dropped from his pistol, as he said, "Miss Nora is an angel! I will go."

"Can't we find room for her with Aunt Polly?" said Clarendon. This suggestion was evidently a relief to Chet.

Old Aunt Polly was glad to do anything to please Mr. Clarendon, but the black face of Orbie gathered a new cloud as she said, "Why don't white folks take her in? Nasty, dirty tramp!" — and then followed a string of degrading epithets.

"Shut up, Orbie!" said Chet, authoritatively. "Papsy has disgraced herself, but there are those older in the ways of sin than she." The storm was hushed by this gentle reminder, and a bed was prepared for the girl whom she professed to hold in such contempt.

In the mean time, Honora watched for the first

symptoms of returning life. Once the eyes slowly opened, and then closed painfully.

"Poor Papsy," whispered Honora, tenderly.

"Wicked Papsy," muttered the girl, in a husky voice.

"'He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth,'" replied Honora, in a low tone.

Miss Clarendon knew that her brother's errand must necessarily consume much time, and she waited patiently. She was aroused from a real nod by the sound of the splashing oars. Holding out her hand as Chet came near, she said, "Thank you." He touched the tip of those delicate fingers, and bowed low, without speaking. He raised Papsy in his arms, and Clarendon and his sister followed in silence. Chet never wearied of his burden, or paused to rest, till he laid her on the cot prepared for her. Honora, with Orbie's help, removed the outer garments, which were saturated with the night dew, and it was not long before increasing warmth restored Papsy to consciousness; and Clarendon, who had made arrangements to have her well cared for, insisted that Honora should now return home.

CHAPTER XXII.

GOSSIP.

“The circle smiled, then whispered, and then sneered,
The misses bridled, and the matrons frowned;
Some hoped things might not turn out as they feared,
Some would not deem such women could be found.”

BYRON.

“**Y**OU DON'T say so!” exclaimed Mrs. Ridgway in a half-whisper to her friend Mrs. Dobbin, as that lady mysteriously held up her finger, and signified that the story she had related was really true. “Well, now, Mrs. Dobbin, this comes hard on them old folks, Walbridge and his wife. How 'll they stand it?”

“So much for bringing up children as if they was Christians,” replied Mrs. Dobbin. “I tell'd the Deacon how matters would turn out long ago.”

“The young feller won't dare to show himself in these parts, I reckon,” said Mrs. Ridgway, looking

askance at her daughter Julia. This amiable young lady was professedly practising at the piano, but really listening eagerly to the gossip.

"Why not, ma?" she said sharply, rising and coming towards her mother. "Nobody will think the less of Richard Walbridge for this *faux pas*. I know I sha'n't for one," she added, tossing her head.

"To be sure," replied Mrs. Dobbin; "Julia is right. But I really don't know who's to take care of the girl. I think the town ought to oblige Mr. Douglass to do that."

"Of course," said Mrs. Ridgway, "one would suppose he'd do that for his own credit. But Rodney Douglass never did care a pin for what folks said about him."

"I guess this niece he's adopted takes after him," replied Mrs. Dobbin. "I spoke to her last summer about racing the streets with this Papsy. My goodness gracious! How mad she was! She said she believed she should n't ask the people of Rockridge who she should walk with."

"She is an impertinent little huzzy," said Julia; "and so mighty fond of this Papsy! The chambermaid at

the Cliff told our cook that Miss Morgan and young Douglass locked her up to prevent her going with her, and she got out of the window and ran away."

"They say," interrupted Mrs. Dobbin, "that Honora Clarendon, after all, is really going to marry; and to that poor painter who was there last summer. Warner's son Bill told Ann Tildy there was letters to him often."

"I don't believe *that!*" said Julia, positively. "He is as poor as Job's turkey, and you'll find Nora Clarendon will look out for the *main chance*, as well as other folks."

"I always thought our Tom liked her," timidly suggested the fond mother.

"Tom!" replied Julia, sneeringly. "She would n't wipe her old shoes on him."

"I don't see why you should say so," whined Eliza, who had left her book of devotional reading, which she had produced when Mrs. Dobbin entered, and joined the group, who were hashing up their neighbors. "I'm sure our Tom is fine-looking, and then, you know, father is worth a great deal more than Colonel Clarendon."

"Colonel Clarendon!" replied Mrs. Dobbin contemptuously. "Why, he has only a very small income, and your father is the richest man in these parts. I'm sure Honora Clarendon may be thankful to jump into such a fortune. I know my girls would be, any time. But somehow, I take the most of a fancy to her brother, though the Deacon will have it that he's very nigh a Papist!"

"O no," said Eliza eagerly, reddening to the very temples as she spoke, "the Deacon is mistaken. Gregory Clarendon has no Romish tendencies whatever. He is a zealous, active Christian,—a little too strenuous, perhaps, for church practices, but age and experience will soften these. Indeed, Mrs. Dobbin, he is—"

"A model of a man," said Tom Ridgway, who had entered the room during her eulogies upon Clarendon. "A model of a man, at least in your eyes."

"Now, Tom, you are too bad," replied the damsel in a mincing voice. "I was only defending Mr. Clarendon against the imputation of Romish tendencies."

"Romish fiddlesticks!" said the brother contemptu-

ously. "But, Eliza," he added, with a look at Julia, "what do you think of your model, — out last night till near midnight, searching for Papsy, getting her in with Aunt Polly, and providing for all her present wants."

"How you talk!" exclaimed Mrs. Ridgway and Mrs. Dobbin, in a breath.

"His model sister was with him in the search," added Tom, observing a triumphant look on Mrs. Dobbin's face, "and through her persuasions a shelter was obtained for the poor thing."

"Well, that is queer!" said Mrs. Dobbin, in a doubtful tone.

"Now, girls," continued Tom, "here's a chance to show your Christian charity you talk so much about; this girl is wholly destitute."

"You don't propose for us to go and see her!" said Eliza, rolling up her eyes with holy horror.

"Why not, little sis?" replied the young man. "She will not harm you, any more than she did Miss Clarendon."

"You speak as if you were personally interested," said Julia with a sneer.

"You are, or ought to be, personally interested," he retorted.

"Does Dr. Walbridge know these reports?" inquired the mother.

"Yes," replied the young man; "there are always those who carry such news. I am told he wrings his hands and weeps continually. Such an event, in a town so noted for morality and uprightness, makes a great stir among the dry bones."

It was true, as Tom Ridgway had said. The expulsion of Papsy from her home at Maple Cliff, and its cause, was more than a nine days' wonder at Rockridge Post-Office, the centre of gossip and town talk, from which the streams of intelligence radiated to the homes and hearths of the inhabitants. The dignity and high position of Dr. Walbridge in the community, Mr. Douglass's connection with Papsy, his having turned her into the street, her brother's doors barred against her, and the Clarendons having come to her relief, all served to season the gossip, and dish it up in a most palatable form. Before many weeks, Dr. Walbridge resigned his situation as Rector of the Church in Rockridge. He could not stay where the face of every man seemed

gazing into his heart's bitterness. Before Christmas, he had journeyed no one knew whither. Mrs. Walbridge consoled herself with the thought that her dear Richard would return from California laden with golden stores, and make amends by his wealth for all his delinquencies.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WALTON AN INVALID.

"Mistake me not; nor let one shadow fall
Upon thy heart already worn with pain;
Let me but love thee, serve thee, this is all;
Grant me but this, and I am strong again.
Strong, — for to love thee, though thou art not mine,
Is to my homeless heart an altar and a shrine."

CHRISTMAS WAS near at hand. Mr. Douglass had sailed for Europe, after disgusting his nephew by the directions, minute and exact almost to absurdity, that he had given in writing for the management of his estate. The young man would have thrown up the whole affair, but for an incipient feeling in his heart unacknowledged even to himself. The respect which from the first he had entertained for Miss Morgan was slowly ripening into something very like love. Honora alone, of all the world, with her habit of watching the variations of countenance, had allowed the

thought for a moment to cross her mind. But indistinct as was the feeling, it had served to curb the pride that would have broken away from his uncle's restraint, and kept Chauncey still master at Maple Cliff.

There had been doubt about Walton's return with Gregory for the holidays, on account of feeble health; but Colonel Clarendon would not hear of a disappointment, and had written himself to the artist, urging *rest*, as necessary for him; and two days before Christmas, a letter came from Gregory which settled the matter, and will give an insight into young Clarendon's daily doings.

NEW YORK, Dec. 23, 18—.

MY DEAR SISTER:—

Father's letter to Robert did what I fear I could never have accomplished, and he has consented to return with me for the holidays. He has a troublesome cough; but I wrote him Aunt Martha would delight in "nursing him up." I had a precious letter from Agatha yesterday, full of that outgushing child-like warmth of heart that makes her so lovely. She gives good accounts of her reading and studies, but does not speak in the most loving manner of your new

rector, my friend Mr. Clement. It seems, in reply to one of her strange, mystical questions, he told her "submission was more becoming in a child than questioning."

You speak of my walks among the poor; I wish you would join in my deep interest in a destitute English family in this large city. I long to transplant them to a purer atmosphere. One of the most trying features of life in town is the surrounding misery that one cannot relieve. The father of this family is full seventy, totally blind, supported by his two daughters, who get a meagre living by copying.

They have evidently been deep sufferers, and there is an air of refinement and good breeding about them that is very attractive.

Please say to father I met General Winchester and his *belle* daughter, at the only party I have attended. Miss Winchester is the reigning beauty in their set,—a splendid girl personally, but I judge an inveterate flirt. She inquired lovingly for you.

The days seem long, my own sister, till I fold you to my heart.

YOUR LOVING BROTHER.

Christmas Eve had brought the friends to the fire-side at Woodland. But alas! for the fallacy of all human hopes, Walton had taken cold on the journey. His cheeks were flushed, and his breathing so impeded, that before the dawn of the great festival Dr. Woodbury was summoned, and pronounced his patient on the verge of lung fever.

This was a grand finale to the projected walks to the Gorge, and plans for a chapel there, which Mr. Clement proposed, and for which they, as gentlemen of taste, were to select the most suitable site. To Walton came the trial in its severest form, not only to lose the delight of his anticipated visit, but the putting his kind friends to trouble and inconvenience distressed him. He had been disciplined and nurtured in the school of trial, however, and he did not murmur. The sick man's chamber was brightened by a group of friends, each striving to relieve him of physical suffering and anxious care.

Thus passed the holidays, and Clarendon began to feel that he must return to his studies. Walton was convalescing, and Gregory was preparing to exact a promise from him, that he would not leave Woodland Bluff till the physician pronounced him in a condition to return to his studio.

"I suppose I must give up this pleasant life again in a few days," said Gregory to his sister, as he showed her the last plan for the chapel, which, with the feeble help of Robert, he had been sketching; "it is high time I was back to my work."

At the mention of his return, the sick man started, turned pale, and covered his face with his hands. The movement was noticed by Honora, and with instinctive delicacy she rose and left the room. As the door closed after her, Clarendon stooped over his friend and said, "Why this sudden grief, Robert? Is it because I must leave you?"

"Sit here," said the invalid, pointing to a seat near by. "Clarendon, I am weak, very weak; my nerves are in a wretched state. You must not leave me," he added, raising his eyes, whose lashes were wet with tears. "You see, I am completely unmanned. You know not with what temptations I am surrounded,—what I have dared to do."

His friend took the thin hand in his. "Robert," he said, "you speak in mysteries. Tell me your grief more plainly. Sickness makes women of us all. Be sure of my sympathy."

“Your sympathy, Gregory? You know not what you promise. I have dared, without thought of the future, without thought of the present, — I have allowed my affections to wander, to fix themselves with a strength that, in my condition, is irresistible, upon one on whom I ought never to have looked but as an angel. This was why I so strenuously refused to return here with you. I knew my weakness, but allowed my better judgment to be overcome, and placed myself in the way of temptation. Had I been well, Gregory, you would not have known my secret; but this weakness here,” he added, placing his hand on his head, “exposed me. With you by me, I am safe; but do you think I could meet alone that gentle tone, that quiet, heavenly smile, and not betray myself?”

During this confession, Clarendon's lips were compressed painfully. At length he said in a whisper, “You refer to my sister?”

The sick man replied, “Do not hate me, Clarendon; the secret shall remain with us; only help me with this struggle till I am strong enough to go away, — away forever.”

“Robert,” said Clarendon, gently, “why should I be

angry with you? I am grieving for a result I might perhaps have prevented. With your sensitive nature and ardent admiration for the loveliest qualities in woman, and your entire seclusion for several years from female society, by ordinary forethought I might have foreseen the result. Had my sister a heart to give, Robert, there is no one among my friends worthier of her than yourself. But it is vain. Her heart lies with the dead. I cannot give you a ray of hope."

"Hope!" replied Walton; "I never dreamed of it.

'It were all one,
That I should love a bright particular star.'

No, Gregory, your sister will never learn my love from me; it shall go down to the grave with this feeble body. This weakness is induced, you may be assured, by physical debility, and returning health will give me again the governing and controlling power; only that you must leave me —"

"Say no more, Robert. I will stay with you as long as you please; but I am grieved for you, and looking forward to the thought that you will never feel that you can come to Woodland again."

"The future is with God," replied Walton.

Mr. Clement came in at this moment, and with the precious offices which the Church provides for the sick and suffering, raised the thoughts of the invalid to a brighter world, and calmed his troubled spirit. Clarendon watched faithfully by his bedside, resisted all calls elsewhere, and strove in every way to keep Honora busied about household and parish matters.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHAUNCEY AND CHARLOTTE.

"Lowliness is the base of every virtue,
And he who goes the lowest builds the safest.
My God keeps all pity for the proud."

FESTUS.

TO THE inhabitants of Maple Cliff, during the early days of January, came a change so sudden and unexpected as to startle and shock the household. Miss Morgan had declined a pleasant evening at Woodland Bluff with Chauncey and Agatha, and was sitting with the mistress of the house, who was growing daily more feeble, and had reclined for hours on the sofa without apparently noticing anything. Suddenly Charlotte felt a cold hand laid on her shoulder, and a breath came upon her cheek. Mrs. Douglass was stooping over her. "Never marry a Douglass!" she whispered, in a husky voice; "I warn you by my crushed heart, never link your fate with one of the family."

Charlotte did not reply, though the varying color that came and went, like flashes of lightning in a summer sky, told that she understood. After a moment's hesitancy, she led the unfortunate woman to the sofa and sat down by her. Mrs. Douglass smoothed the hand that held hers. "You have been kind to me," she said, speaking timidly, "and I want to tell you all about —" she started—"about the past." Assured by Charlotte's encouraging manner, as she said, "You may safely tell me all," she proceeded: "I want to tell you about my life. I was born in Scotland, and had one only brother, who was driven from home by my stern father." For a moment she was lost; then, speaking again, she said, "Sister Catherine brought me to Canada, the House of the Blessed Virgin, after they died."

"After the death of your parents?" inquired Charlotte.

"Yes," she replied; "till I saw Mr. Douglass I had a pleasant home with the sisters: but I married him, because I was afraid to say no." Here she again faltered, but, summoning resolution, she proceeded: "My life has been one long, long night; day dawned when you came; I thank God for it," she said, clasping her hands and raising her streaming eyes.

Charlotte, fearful of the effects of excitement, changed the subject, by asking for her brother,—if she had ever seen him since he left home.

“Never!” she said, sadly. “He was a proud boy, and made his own way in the world. He married in England, and never knew—for there was no one to search for him—that my father did not disinherit him. Often, often, have I urged Mr. Douglass to seek him,—begged him to make an effort to restore my brother his own; but in vain. He may be now living a beggar, and I defrauding him.”

The deep feelings now broke forth uncontrollably; her eyes grew wild and fixed; she sunk back upon the couch, moaning in a low, melancholy tone, which gradually grew fainter. To Miss Morgan there seemed something deathlike in the utter exhaustion that followed the moanings. She apprised Chauncey of Mrs. Douglass’s condition when he came in; he rallied her on her pale face, and assured her his aunt would be well in the morning; but, in spite of his entreaties to the contrary, she kept vigil herself. The cold hours of the night crept along drearily. The *caution* of Mrs. Douglass was ringing in Charlotte’s ears. Can there be need of

this warning?" she said again and again to herself. "Have I conducted in a way to give encouragement to the thought?"

From her girlhood, Miss Morgan's mind had been filled with present duties. She had never given the reins to her imagination, as young ladies of more leisure and less self-control might have done, and matrimony had scarce entered into her visions of the future. Her highest ambition, in the days when the most commonplace dream, was to exert a wide-spread religious influence. In the Romish Church, she would probably have sought a convent, where she might have become Lady Superior.

The labors of Mrs. Fry and Miss Dix excited her warmest admiration; but to her no such path opened, for she had a wise dread of going out of the place in which God had placed her. Through the hours of that lonely night, life's realities and life's purpose came pressing upon her. As the first ray of morning light dawned, she observed a marked change in the countenance of Mrs. Douglass. Slowly the eyes turned to her, with their customary sad look. "Rodney, I forgive you all," she faintly whispered,—"*yes, all, even that,—even that.*"

Charlotte read the severe struggle that followed, and despatched a servant to Mr. Douglass's room; but before he arrived, the freed spirit was rejoicing in her freedom. The funeral rites were over at Maple Cliff, and the departed was scarce missed, except by Charlotte, who began to realize the peculiarity of her position in the household. With this realization came a change in her manners toward Chauncey, so marked as to be felt. It would have been better could she have continued her former kind ways to Mr. Douglass; but this with her was an impossibility. The cares of the household, which she conscientiously undertook, curtailed her walks with Honora, and brought her more intimately in contact with Chauncey, but she avoided unnecessary conversation with him, and answered him in monosyllables.

It happened one afternoon, in the latter part of January, that Gregory Clarendon and his sister drove up the avenue at Maple Cliff. The tempting bed of snow had brought Agatha and her brother to the lawn, where they were busily engaged building a snow fort. The child sprung forward to meet the sleigh.

"We are come," said Clarendon, returning her warm

greeting, "to persuade Miss Charlotte to ride. She confines herself to the house too much. I expect to leave town next week, if Robert continues to gain, and this may be my last chance."

"If you can persuade her to go," said Chauncey, a little piqued, "it will be more than I have been able to do for the last fortnight. All my lessons on air and exercise are thrown away on Miss Morgan."

"Agatha profits by them," replied Clarendon, looking with admiration upon the brilliant glow of health in the little one's cheeks.

Chauncey soon had the satisfaction (for it must be owned it was a satisfaction) of seeing Gregory return to the sleigh without Charlotte. "So you were unsuccessful, like myself?" he said, gayly.

"Yes," replied Clarendon, "but we have permission to do what is the next best thing. To take away your playmate."

"Oh!" cried Agatha, "I am not fit to go!" pointing to her red hood and cloak. "They will take me for the 'Scarlet Lady'!"

Clarendon laughed heartily, assured her there was no danger of such a mistake, as that lady was repre-

sented to be of respectable size. "Besides," he added, as he lifted her into the sleigh, "you never looked better in your life."

Here was a time for which Chauncey had sought: a time to see Charlotte alone. He opened the library door with alacrity, thinking he would sit there and collect his thoughts before seeking Miss Morgan. With delight he saw Charlotte on the topmost of the library steps, looking for a missing volume. She blushed deeply, but in attempting to descend hastily her dress caught in the curtain-knob, and she would have been precipitated to the floor, but the strong arm of Chauncey intervened, and saved her from what might have been a serious injury. She thanked him coldly, and would have passed out, but he stood between her and the door.

"Miss Morgan," he said, his voice slightly tremulous with the struggle between pride and affection, "we have heretofore been friends, and, as such, I would ask if anything in my conduct has caused the great change in your manner toward me. Instead of the freedom of a friend that marked our earlier intercourse, I am met with the coldness of enmity. The

change is so noticeable as to excite the observation of my sister."

Charlotte felt at once her mistake. Chauncey's kind consideration and interest might have been the result of friendship, and she saw that she had dwelt morbidly on the subject, and on the warning of Mrs. Douglass. It would be strictly true to say, she was thoroughly ashamed of herself. For a moment she remained silent, being too truthful to gloss over her conduct; at length she brought herself to say, "Mr. Douglass, if I have done wrong, excuse me. You have shown yourself friendly, and I would not be ungrateful."

Her nerves were weakened by care, and, overcome by her very efforts at composure, she sunk down into the nearest seat. A show of tenderness on her part was all that Chauncey needed; and before she could recover herself, he had made a manly declaration of the love that had grown up in his heart,—his admiration for her virtues, and his trust and repose in her strength of character.

"Mr. Douglass," she said, as soon as she could command herself, at the same time withdrawing coldly the

hand he had taken, "say no more on this subject. We may continue friends; we can never be nearer."

"Do not say *never*," he replied, wrestling with the pride that was sorely wounded by her coldness. "Give me at least hope that time and a better acquaintance —"

"Mr. Douglass," she said, rising, "say no more! This declaration cannot but render my position here uncomfortable."

Stung by the haughtiness of her reply, and disappointed by her utter want of sympathy, he drew himself up haughtily as she passed, and replied, "You need fear nothing, Miss Morgan! you shall never be troubled by me again."

Thus parted the two, — Charlotte not quite sure whether she had done right; Douglass chafed and irritated by her want of comprehension of the depth of his feelings.

CHAPTER XXV.

AGATHA'S OUTBREAK.

“Through the night,
 The hoar-frost gathered o'er each leaf and spray,
 Weaving its filmy net-work thin and bright.
 Turf and tree,
 Pranked with delicate embroidery;
 And every withered stump and mossy stone
 With gems incrustated and with seed-pearls sown.”

MRS. WHITMAN.

“’T is not her talent to conceal her thought,
 And carry smiles and sunshine in her face,
 When discontent sits heavy at her heart.”

ADDISON.

“SUPPOSE WE drive up to Chet’s,” said Gregory, as he dashed through the village with his sister and Agatha. “I hear through Mr. Clement that the baby there is quite ill, and the steep, rough path will take a little of the mettle out of my Bucephalus.”

The winter garments of the Gorge were white and

glistening. Every rock was crystallized, and presented in the dancing sunbeams numberless rainbows. The last fall of snow had been light and fleecy, and hung like a pure drapery over the broad hemlocks that studded the rocks and crags.

They found Rosa in deep grief, wringing her hands and weeping hopelessly. Chet walked the room with the babe, soothing its moaning with a low, monotonous chant. Honora took the child from its father, and the mother came and knelt by her side.

"Must I lose her?" she exclaimed, looking piteously into Honora's face. "O must I lose her? O Miss Nora, if the good Lord would but spare her! I know I have loved my darling Nellie too well. O Lord! save her; O my God! spare her," she said, throwing herself prostrate on the floor.

Chet came forward and soothed her tenderly, while Clarendon offered fervent prayers for a sick child.

"I shall stay with Rosa to-night," said Honora, as Gregory indicated it was time to return; "please drive down for me in the morning."

Honora had much knowledge of the ills of childhood. There was seldom an infant ailing among the poor,

but she was there to assist or advise. Towards morning, as she held the suffering child, she observed a change for the better. Rosa was overwhelmed with joy, and poured out her thanks to Miss Nora, mingled with self-reproaches, owning in the end, without a question, that it was her influence that had prevented Chet from opening his house to the sinning, suffering Papsy, and adding the promise that it should be so no longer.

* * * * *

When Gregory came for his sister in the morning, she saw at once, from the face she had read so many years, that he had pleasant news.

"What is it, brother?" she said, as they drove round the steep bluff that separated Chet's castle from the main road. "I know you have something nice to tell me."

"You are a witch or a clairvoyant, Honora, I believe," he replied. "I am perfectly aching to tell you the news. You know how anxious I have been that you should spend some time in the city, as you used to do; your nun-like life is unfitting you for the world."

"Polite to your elder sister!" she said, playfully; "as if she was not calculated to adorn any society."

"That you are," he replied, "and I am loath you should 'waste your sweetness on the desert air.'"

"I think our friends at Woodland and Maple Cliff would be much obliged by your insinuations. But, seriously, brother, tell me what it is?"

"Well, you are to go to New York in two weeks, with father and me. Father had a letter last evening from General Winchester, urging his attendance on a festive meeting of military officers. As his early friend, the General claims him for his guest, and you of course are included. The remains of military spirit are really roused. Father made up his mind at once to go, and I know you will not be left behind."

Honora smiled at her brother's impetuosity. "You will not carry me off, *nolens volens*," she said; "and I see cogent reasons to prevent. In the first place, Mr. Walton is not in a condition to travel; it would be almost foolhardiness for him to take a journey at this inclement season."

"We have settled that, Honora," replied Gregory. "Aunt Martha will be in her element when she can have Robert to herself, and he will serve the double purpose of company and employment. You may be

sure," he said more seriously, "this arrangement will relieve Robert of a load that now presses upon him and retards his recovery. No power would keep him here if he felt he prevented the journey. Have you other cogent reasons?"

"I am afraid," she said, laughing, "it is so long since I have been into the *beau monde*, that I shall mortify you by my *countrified* ways."

"I will not allow you, Miss Clarendon, to speak thus of my sister," he replied gayly. "There is not a lady in New York whose manners will bear the scrutiny of the world any better than my Honora's. I only wish Isabelle Winchester may take pattern."

"To tell you the truth, brother, I must say, one great objection I have to this plan is the fear that Isabelle and I have diverged so far since we were school-girls together that there will hardly be common ground to meet upon."

"Never fear, sister. I can assure you she will do the conversation, and you can listen to the account of the lovers slain, and look at the trophies of victories, and say, 'Ah! indeed!' That will be all that will be required of you. It will at least be helping you

practise self-denial. I only wish Agatha could be in town with us; she will explode or turn into stone, like all the inhabitants of Maple Cliff. I met Chauncey to-day, and he was positively as tall and cold as an iceberg. They are worse than ever there, since Mrs. Douglass's death."

"Yes," replied Honora, hesitatingly; "Charlotte has trouble on her mind, of which she does not like to speak. Her *position* there is a trying one."

"How you women see ahead," replied Clarendon, laughing heartily. "It is as clear as daylight! Chauncey Douglass has made a fool of himself, by making love to Charlotte Morgan,—he had the look of a refused lover this morning,—and Mademoiselle is dying of dignified indignation. The worst feature of the case is, that nobody can sympathize with them. It is pitiable," he added, with another hearty laugh.

"You seem to feel deeply for them," said Honora, smiling. "I hope you may profit by their example."

"Trust me for that," he replied, as he alighted at the door of his home.

It was decided during the day that Honora should accompany her father and brother to the city the next

week, and the news was declared to Charlotte and Agatha, who came over for the evening. Agatha heard the intelligence with vexation, disappointment, and dismay. To lose Gregory's society was hard, but to part with Honora and Colonel Clarendon also, she could not. In vain Mr. Walton promised to give her lessons in painting in oils, and Aunt Martha offered to initiate her into the mysteries of cake-making. The burst of passionate weeping was violent, and continued so long, in spite of the soothing efforts of her friends, that Charlotte severely and cuttingly reproved her for her want of self-control. Then followed a scene that Miss Morgan might well regret to have produced. Agatha's fine eyes, from whose depths in repose came the reflection of a loving heart, flashed and sparkled with intensity of passion. The paleness of death spread over her countenance, and from her lips burst keen and bitter reproaches, for want of sympathy, coldness, and even unkindness. It was evidently the outgushing of a stream long restrained. Her slender figure was drawn up to its full height, her head thrown back, and her little foot planted firmly forward. The family were taken by surprise. Walton looked wonderingly at the

child from out his sorrowful eyes. In the height of the paroxysm, as Agatha spoke of the "intolerable assumption" of her teacher, the door opened, and young Clarendon appeared. He did not speak, but his look caused her to pause in the midst of her denunciations. Pride forbade her to sink into her seat and hide her head, and she walked haughtily from the room.

"I am disappointed, sadly disappointed," said Honora, after she had gone out.

"I am not," replied Gregory; "I have been expecting something of this kind, but did not look for anything quite so savage."

"If I had been told of this," remarked Walton, in a grieved tone, "I should have said it must be an overdrawn picture."

"The bow is bent too far," said Colonel Clarendon. "The child wants companionship and recreation. She will grow up a warped character, — proud, tempestuous."

"I think not, father," said Gregory deferentially. "There is too strong an effort for the right, and too many pious hearts interested, to fear an utter failure."

When Gregory appeared to attend Miss Morgan to

her home, the little girl was nowhere to be found. He followed Charlotte into the drawing-room at Maple Cliff, meaning to speak with her plainly of some defects in her management of the child. They were both surprised to find Agatha curled up in the bay window, where she had evidently wept herself to sleep. Her bosom, even then, heaved with an occasional sob. It was a favorable moment for Gregory.

"Charlotte," he said, looking up into her sorrowful face, "love this child. Deal gently with her, very gently. You may help her to be a lovely, winning character, or you may leave her a haughty, wilful woman. An indifferent person she can never be, and with you in a great measure rests the result."

He spoke strongly, and his words had their effect. Charlotte had great confidence in his judgment and good sense; and when he added, "For this night's failings, give her unwonted tenderness and kindness," she seemed to gain a glimpse of the secret of Gregory's influence.

Agatha awoke from her disturbed slumber, and the pressure of her hand in Gregory's caused her to start; but he said very gently, "Agatha, my child."

She opened her eyes in astonishment, and, raising herself from her recumbent position, stood by Gregory's side resting her head on his shoulder.

"Can you love me after to-night, Cousin Gregory?" she said sorrowfully.

"More than ever," he replied tenderly, "for though we fall, we shall not be utterly cast away. You will yet obtain that for which you are striving, — self-control and submission. To-night you were taken unawares, suffering with the thoughts of parting from us all; and reproof at such a time came like irritation upon an open wound. This palliates, though it does not excuse your fault. The penitence you now feel is a promise for the future."

He then spoke of that future, with its high hopes and responsibilities, making even the unpleasant duty of apologizing to her teacher (upon which he insisted) less repulsive by his sympathy.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE ARTIST'S STORY.

"New Eves in all her daughters came,
As strong to charm, as weak to err,
As sure of man through praise and blame,
Whate'er they brought him, Pride or Shame,
Their still unwearied worshipper."

MOORE.

"It is a quiet picture of delight
Your humble cottage hiding from the sun,
In the thick woods. Crowding leaves
Of glistening green and clustering bright flowers
Of purple
Woo the gentle eye and delicate touch."

SIMMS.

COLONEL CLARENDON and daughter were hospitably entertained in the superb mansion of his early friend, General Winchester. All the appointments of the place were on a scale of magnificence, which to Honora, with her simple tastes, savored of ostentation. Many of Gregory's evenings, of course,

were given to the pleasure of his father's and sister's society.

"What do you think of Isabelle?" he said to Honora, the first opportunity. "Peerless, is n't she?"

"She is," replied Honora, "the personification of my idea of the women in the Arabian Nights."

"*Oriental*," said Gregory. "That expresses it exactly."

"But she is fascinating and bewitching," said Honora, "as well as beautiful. My sober senses are sometimes bewildered, and even father is among her worshippers."

"I can't understand it," replied Gregory. "To me she appears an arrant coquette, than which there is no more despicable character among women."

"You are so warm in the matter," said Honora, laughing, "that I shall look to see you among her train of followers before spring."

"And hung up like the rest of them," replied Gregory, "as little Bo-Peep hung up the remains of her lost sheep."

Honora thought her brother severe in his judgment of Isabelle Winchester. She knew there must be mo-

ments when the fashionable lady tired of all this adulation; moments in which her better nature craved something more substantial. But, surrounded as she was, at home and abroad, with admiration, the idol of her fond father, the pride of her twin brothers, with every wish gratified, and none to remind her that

“Life is real, life is earnest,”

what could be expected of poor human nature?

General Winchester's family were well-bred, but Honora had occasional hints about being “righteous overmuch,” because she was constant at church, expressed her disapprobation (when questioned) of many fashionable amusements, and visited the poor with her brother.

Honora had become deeply interested in the English family of whom Gregory had written, and was as earnest as he that they should be removed to a more fitting home than the dark alley they now inhabited, and suggested the Bird's Nest, reminding Gregory that the daughters could support themselves and father by designing for the large mills at Ridgeville, — a talent which Honora discovered in the elder sister. after two or three interviews.

Miss Clarendon's sombre dress excused her from all but family parties, as are called gatherings of one's "dear five hundred friends," and she found leisure for long letters to Charlotte and Agatha. By the advice of her friend, given in parting, Charlotte had striven to return to her old kind manner with Chauncey Douglass. He was one of the proudest of his kind; the wound she had made had been a deep one, and he met all her efforts to be on comfortable terms with a cool indifference that reminded her so strongly of his uncle as to make her look back and shudder.

In the mean time Agatha had become a pet with Mr. Walton. She came to him daily for instructions in painting. In looking over his pictures one afternoon, for a suitable subject for her next lesson, Agatha selected one of a pretty English cottage, embowered in trees and vines. There was nothing striking about the picture, except the exquisite lights and shadows, that gave to the landscape a beauty such as comes after a summer shower, when the sun shines forth from the bosom of the scattering clouds, into the heart of every leaf and spire of grass, making rainbows in the sparkling drops.

“O, this is a dear love!” exclaimed Agatha. “I will take this.”

“That! Oh!” he said in a voice of agony. Recovering himself however in a moment, he added in a low tone, “You may take it, my child, and, if I can nerve myself to it, I will give you its history. That is a picture of my early home, my English home, which I left when but a few years older than yourself.” Agatha’s eyes looked sympathy, and he proceeded. “I have never told any one of my home, and I tell you now, that you may see to what uncontrolled self-will may lead. I was an only son, wayward and wilful, longing continually for freedom from restraint, unwilling to submit to rightful authority. I left the gentle influences, the mild government of the household, and enlisted in the army.” His voice grew faint, and he spoke with difficulty.

“Mr. Walton,” said Agatha, observing his deep emotion, “I am afraid you will be ill again, if you try to tell me what causes you so much grief.”

“Agatha,” he replied, “I have never known one unclouded day since my final act of rebellion. The excitement of life, even a soldier’s life, could never

drown the voice of conscience. I enlisted, as I have said, and left my parents and sisters forever."

Agatha looked up, horror and amazement pictured on her countenance. "Did you never go back?" she said earnestly.

"The regiment I joined," he replied, "sailed at once for India. My health was much broken by the climate, and more than all, distressed as I was, *pride* would not suffer me to write even to my mother. I flattered myself I would return and astonish them all by my knowledge of the world. After an absence of eight years my feet trod again my native soil. In Liverpool I learned from an acquaintance the dreadful truth, that my mother had died soon after I left, and my father, broken by grief and loss of property, had sailed two or three years before my arrival for America. I had no relatives on either side that I had ever known, and I desperately resolved to follow my father and sisters, not with the hope of finding them, but with that restless desire to do something that haunts the soul filled with remorse. I thank God," he added with deep emotion, "that the very depth of my loneliness led me to seek shelter in my Heavenly Father's house."

"And you have never known any more of your friends?" said Agatha, wiping her eyes. "How very sad!"

"No," he replied; "my life for the last six years has been a struggle for a subsistence, which I have obtained by a talent inherited from the mother whose heart I broke."

"It seems," said his companion, rising, and walking uneasily about the room, "as if I could not wait. O if I had money, and was a few years older, I would search every nook in America, till I found your friends."

"That would be the labor of more than one lifetime," he said, smiling faintly. "America is a wide place, and my friends are poor and unknown."

This long and exciting conversation brought a renewed attack of fever to Mr. Walton, and to the child it gave food for thought and fancy, and plans for many a long winter evening.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FERGUSONS.

“We have our younger brothers too,
The poor, the outcast, and the trodden down.
They are a hungered for our love and care;
It is their spirits that are famishing;
And our dear Father in his Testament
Bequeathed them to us as our dearest trust.”

O UNCLE, I am glad to see you!” cried Agatha, as she sprung down the slippery steps at Maple Cliff, one cold morning in February, and embraced Mr. Douglass. He kissed her with unusual warmth. Charlotte noticed a painful contraction of the brow when he entered the drawing-room, and a careful avoidance of the chair and corner Mrs. Douglass formerly occupied; but this was all the notice he took of a vacancy he must have felt. Foreign travel and society had worn off some of the rough edges of his character, and he was perhaps more than ever a man of the world.

Charlotte observed him frequently look at her with a scrutinizing glance, and back again to his nephew. The truth was, in the close of a business letter from Tom Ridgway, a bit of scandal was inserted, that had hastened the master's return. "Rumor says, that the heads of the family at Maple Cliff will ere long be the *united head*." Inquiring of Clarendon, in New York, as to the truth of this report, Gregory, enjoying his evident dissatisfaction with something that was really none of his business, had told Mr. Douglass, that "stranger things than that had happened," and the next day found him (wholly unexpected) at his own home.

To frustrate at once all plans of this kind, he announced his intention, the next morning at breakfast, of taking Agatha to New York with him for a few weeks, and his desire that Miss Morgan should accompany them.

Agatha's joy was boundless. To go to New York, which, to her youthful imagination, embraced the best part of the world,—of her own land, at least. She could not sleep till she had despatched a letter to Honora and Gregory, communicating her joy.

"I am sorry she is coming here just now," said Honora, as she closed the letter, "much as I should really love to see her."

"The fresh, youthful speeches will be refreshing after so much flummery," replied Gregory; "but I dread this atmosphere for her excitable temperament and unsettled state of mind."

"Yes," said Honora, sadly; "I hoped she would think of Baptism and Confirmation at Easter, and a sojourn here will surely drive all these thoughts from her mind; her love of the bright and beautiful will give an influence to Isabelle that may be hurtful."

"I shall fear more," replied Clarendon, "the effect of going about from one scene of amusement to another, as she will; for Mr. Douglass will live upon excitement, I fancy. But we will keep her with us as much as possible," he added, thoughtfully.

The brother and sister had gone out during the conversation, and had reached the narrow alley which contained the home of the Fergusons, the English family before mentioned. The passage was dark, and they were obliged to go slowly up the rickety stairway. Sounds of swearing men, scolding women, and crying babies resounded from every side.

"The Bird's Nest would be free from these annoyances," whispered Gregory, as Honora clung more closely to his arm.

As he spoke, a man dressed in dirty finery attempted to push himself between them. They paused to let him pass, and he suddenly turned and rapidly ascended the fourth flight of stairs. Honora was too essentially frightened to speak, but she knew at once that she had seen that face and figure before, disguised as they both were.

The surroundings of the suffering family were meagre, but the faultless cleanliness of every article in their one apartment, and the neat and ingenious devices to give the room an air of comfort, were to Honora an ever-new delight. The proposed removal had been suggested to the family, and matters were in a train for maturing the plan as soon as spring opened. The prospect had infused new life into the daughters. Catherine, the elder, was a girl of plain, straightforward common-sense, well fitted for the life she had been called to lead since her womanhood. Stella, the younger, was a fairy-like, gentle being, of sixteen summers, with eyes that seemed to have gathered color

from the violet, and expression from a soul thoughtful beyond her years.

The aged father was a gentleman in his appearance and manners, though clothed in garments that would not have been presentable on Fifth Avenue. His hair and beard, silvered with age, hung in a luxuriance quite remarkable over his shoulders and breast. This, with his broad forehead and Roman nose, gave him a look strikingly patriarchal. After conversation about their removal, &c., Gregory inquired if they were not annoyed by the noise of the house.

"Not so much by their noise," replied the father, "as by the insolence of some of them. We are obliged to keep our doors closely barred; and I believe Katy has other means of keeping them at bay," he said, pointing to the wall. They looked in the direction which he indicated, and saw two pistols protruding from their holsters.

"Yes," said Catherine, calmly, as Honora turned toward her with surprise; "I do not keep them to look at; I am prepared to use them if we are beset as we have sometimes been."

She then conversed aside with Honora, telling her

of a notorious villain who had dogged the steps of her sister till she was afraid to trust her out alone. Honora's heart sunk within her as she heard of the snares and pitfalls that beset the path of the poor.

"Gregory," she said, as they emerged from the dark alley into the open street, "did you know that wicked-looking man we met in the passage, both going and coming?"

"Know him!" exclaimed her brother. "I did not dare even look at him, lest I should be tempted to knock him down for his insolence, and thus risk your life as well as my own."

"I am sure it was Richard Walbridge," she said in a low, decided tone. "It is dreadful to leave these people — these girls — in such a neighborhood."

"The wretch!" muttered Gregory. "We must work quickly if we would not be outwitted by this scoundrel. I will leave you at General Winchester's door, and write at once to Mr. Clement and Tom Ridgway to settle this matter of the Bird's Nest. One can hardly sleep quietly, knowing that these unprotected girls are in danger."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ISABELLE WINCHESTER.

"She who only finds her self-esteem
In others' admiration, begs an alms,
Depends on others for her daily food,
And is the very servant of her slaves."

JOANNA BAILLIE.

"O, life, how pleasant is thy morning!
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning,
Cold, pausing Caution's lesson scorning,
We frisk away.

We wander here, we wander there,
We eye the Rose upon the Brier,
Unmindful that the Thorn is near
Among the leaves."

BURNS.

HONORA HAD gone to her room after her walk, and was preparing to dress for dinner, when a light tap was heard at her door, and Isabelle Winchester answered the summons, "Come in." She was still in her morning dishabille, and sunk languidly down

into the *fauteuil*. "So your brother would not stay for dinner," she said, in an indifferent tone. "He is very chary of his company. Is he afraid of me?" she inquired, looking archly out of the corners of her bewitching eyes.

"I have never heard him express such a fear," replied Honora, with a smile. "Nevertheless, it would not be surprising if he were, considering the numerous victims."

"Pshaw!" said Isabelle, impatiently; "I'm tired to death of them!" She placed her small hands over her face, and rested her head.

"Are you tired of all of them?" said Honora, gayly "Is there no preference?"

"Yes, every mother's son of them," replied the petted girl. "It is 'nt I, Isabelle Winchester, they care for. There is not one of them who would not turn and worship the first handsome face belonging to the only daughter of a wealthy gentleman!"

"Isabelle," said Honora, sitting down by her companion and smoothing her black tresses, "is there after all nothing satisfying in all this admiration?"

Isabelle shook her head. "Nothing," she said, laugh-

ing faintly; "and yet, I suppose I should be wretched without it. 'Just as the twig is bent,' you know. But I am really disappointed Mr. Clarendon did not stay for dinner. That stupid Count Morier is to be here, and I wanted Gregory as a sort of foil."

Honora looked disappointed. She had hoped that Isabelle was really dissatisfied with the thoroughly worldly life she was leading, so contrary to her early professions, and was longing for something better. Isabelle saw the change in her countenance.

"Now, please don't look so grave," she said, coaxingly; "I know I'm a dreadful sinner, and I suppose that is the reason why your brother dislikes me so heartily; but I can't act the hypocrite, even for him," she said, proudly.

"Has he told you he dislikes you?" said Honora, smiling.

"I can tell," replied Isabelle, shaking her head incredulously. "Ah, here comes my maid!"

Celinda entered, and gave her mistress a card accompanied with a bouquet of choice flowers.

"Engaged," said the imperious beauty, haughtily, as she looked at the card. "Touching and tender," she

added, sarcastically, as she took a slip of paper from among the flowers, and read the sentiment. "The poor fellow must be really demented! But I will introduce you," she said, passing the card to Honora.

"Pierre McLellan!" exclaimed Miss Clarendon.

"Do you know him?" said Isabelle.

"Not personally," she replied; "but brother roomed with him in college, and was much interested in him."

"An associate of Mr. Clarendon's!" said Isabelle, with surprise. "I suppose, then, he was a fine fellow; he was indeed, when I made his acquaintance in New Orleans, more than a year since. But, O, his infatuation about me, it was really ludicrous! He has run down since then, till he has run out his fortune, and of course his friends. It is reported that he has gambled indefinitely."

"Poor young man!" said Honora, with a sigh. "His course downward must have been a rapid one, for it is but little more than a year since Gregory knew him, and he could hardly have been in any way of dissipation then."

She looked at her watch, and her companion, yawning, said, "Well, I suppose I must dress for dinner."

The next week Mr. Douglass arrived with his niece at the Astor House. Miss Morgan had considered the subject, reflected upon her position in the city, at a public house, as governess, under Mr. Douglass's protection, and felt that she might take this opportunity to visit an aged aunt, her only surviving relative, living among the Green Mountains. Her aunt was miserly, ill-tempered, and in feeble health, and Charlotte knew that, in preferring her society, she was not "pleasure-seeking." Mr. Douglass was angry at her decision, and secretly mistrusted her reasons for this course; but he was too proud to urge the matter, and Agatha and her teacher were separated.

Mr. Douglass had not been a week in town, before the imperious Isabelle, charmed with the little country girl, as she called Agatha, insisted that a hotel was no place for such a child, and brought her to her father's house. This change did not entirely please Gregory or Honora. The admiration of Isabelle and her brothers, and their exertions to entertain their new guest, left the child no time for quiet, rational thought. Gregory insisted upon taking Agatha with him in his visits to the poor, and these were the only times he could

meet her out of a room filled with gay, worldly people.

The intelligence came, that all was ready for the removal of the Fergusons to the Bird's Nest, and Clarendon called to take Agatha and Honora with him to communicate the glad news to the waiting household. He found Isabelle and her brothers with Honora and Agatha, deeply engaged in an interesting discussion. The moment he took a seat, the child came and rested her flushed face on his shoulder.

"Perhaps we should do well to consult my brother," said Honora, gravely.

"O, of course he will agree with you," replied Isabelle, gayly. "An incipient minister too! He could hardly do otherwise."

"I think," said Duncan Winchester, looking at Agatha with interest, "Miss Douglass is fully competent to decide for herself."

The blush deepened on Agatha's cheek.

"What is it?" said Gregory, looking at her flushed face.

"Only that we are urgent," replied Isabelle, "that Agatha should go to Madame Dolan's fancy ball. It

will be a quiet affair, and she will have me for a chaperone, and my brothers for protectors."

"I think," replied Honora, modestly, "that, if there were no other objections, she is too young for such amusements."

"Even if it were not the season of Lent," added Gregory, slowly, at the same time looking fixedly into Agatha's eyes.

"Surely, Mr. Clarendon," said Isabelle, "you would not require such a child to keep Lent?"

"It is not I that require it," replied Gregory. "A child that is old enough to go to balls, should have arrived at years of discretion. Is n't it so, Miss Winchester?" he said, bowing to that lady.

"You can't suppose I intend to condemn myself," replied Isabelle, laughing. "Nevertheless, it is pleasant to hear something besides praise. It is a comfort to find one man who will not flatter!" she said, a little sarcastically.

Gregory colored. "If I do not flatter, Miss Isabelle," he replied, "neither would I condemn any one. But this child," he said, taking Agatha's hand, "is a little *protégée* of mine, and I feel in a measure responsible for her well-doing."

His sympathizing tone and manner almost persuaded Agatha to give up the thought of the amusement. She had an earnest desire to go to the ball, but a reluctance to grieve her best friends. Higher than this she did not yet look.

As she went for her bonnet for the walk, she met Duncan Winchester on the stairs. "Miss Agatha," he said, pausing before her, "by what right does this young parson assume this authority over you?"

Agatha felt inclined to smile at the indignation expressed in his tone of voice, but she replied, "It is not authority, Mr. Winchester, that Mr. Clarendon would exercise, but the liberty of giving advice."

"One would suppose your uncle's permission and our wishes were sufficient," said the young man persuasively.

"I shall probably do as I please," she replied, a little proudly.

At this moment her uncle's voice was heard in the hall, and her contemplated walk was brought to an end, Clarendon and his sister departing without her, as they went, discussing the removal of the Fergusons.

"Did you ever think," said Gregory, "that Stella Ferguson reminds one strongly of Robert Walton?"

"Indeed she does!" replied Honora. "It is Robert she is like. The same deep blue eyes, the same pensive expression, the same fair, open brow."

"And the same toned voice," said her brother. "Agatha saw the resemblance at her first interview, and was possessed with the idea that they must be relatives of Robert's. It seems he told her the history of his life. She did not feel at liberty to repeat it to me; but he acknowledged that his friends had removed to America, that he had never seen them here, and that he supposed he had two sisters."

"The surname being so different, might have satisfied her," said Honora.

"So it would a reasonable person," replied Gregory.

"But you know Agatha's determination. She was sure the Fergusons had assumed a name, and I was obliged to exercise all my authority to prevent her from doing some foolish thing; and then I could only persuade her by promising to ask Mr. Ferguson myself if that was his family name in England."

"And you really did it!" said Honora, laughing.

"Charlotte has often wondered at your influence over the child; I think I may wonder now at hers over you."

"I was ashamed of myself," he replied, "as soon as the words were out of my mouth; for the old man drew back his noble head, and answered my question in the affirmative, adding, that 'he had never had reason to be ashamed of his name.'"

CHAPTER XXIX.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

"The sorrows of my spirit are enlarged,
My eyes are full of tears,
The grief with which my soul is overcharged
Excites strange doubts and fears."

AFTER TAKING leave of the Fergusons in the cars that were to take them to Rockridge, Clarendon and his sister returned to General Winchester's.

"Come in, dear brother," said Honora, as they reached the door, "it is an hour when I can see you *alone*, and that is a privilege I have learned to prize." She led the way to the library.

"Gregory," she said, as she sunk on the sofa, and covered her face with her hands, "I am very weary of life here, and long for home. I thought I would never say so to you, but I cannot help it, existence seems so aimless and without purpose among these

frivolities and fashions." She smiled through her tears as he stooped to kiss her cheek.

"It must be unsatisfying to you, dear Honora," he said, taking a seat by her side, "except as you see father amused and refreshed by opportunities, of which he has deprived himself for years, of indulging his taste for the fine arts."

"I was wrong," she replied, "even for an instant to give way to my selfish feelings. Yes, very selfish," she added. "But I have had such an unaccountable weight upon my heart all day, that I could bear it no longer without the sympathy of my brother."

"It may be partly anxiety for Agatha that gives you this depression just now," he replied. "I own to having had something of the feeling myself. In this whirlpool of dissipation, I fear all her better feelings will be sunk."

"Yes," said Honora with a sigh; "to-morrow is the night of the fancy ball, and her uncle urges her attendance; the next night there is a juvenile party in the neighborhood, the next a dancing-school ball, and Friday I heard Mr. Douglass tell her she must hold herself engaged to go with him to see some celebrated

danseuse. He is in ecstasies over her dancing, which Isabelle tells her is 'divine.' On the whole, her young head must be well balanced not to be turned with all this admiration."

"Agatha's nature will never be satisfied with these frivolities," replied her brother, after a pause. "They are attractive to her now from their novelty, but she is too young, altogether too young to—" He looked from the window, and saw Agatha on horseback, accompanied by Duncan Winchester.

"Astonishing!" he exclaimed, "that two such children should be trusted on these city horses alone."

"Young men rarely count themselves children at nineteen," said Honora, looking after the equestrians. "But must you go, brother?"

"Yes," he replied, taking up his hat. "It is late, and I have yet to look after that pet dove of Stella's."

The kiss with which the brother and sister parted was followed by a sigh from both hearts. At the corner of the street the equestrian "children" dashed by Mr. Clarendon. He could not even raise a smile for Agatha, but touched his hat and walked on. It was many weeks before the reflection of that sad look passed from the remembrance of Agatha.

The child's conscience reproached her, amid her preparations for the great ball; but, like many older and wiser than herself, she strove to quiet the voice of the inward monitor by plunging more deeply into the gayeties around her. The Winchesters were all devotion to her, and everything was put in requisition for her gratification. Mr. Douglass, too, was charmed by the ease and self-possession with which she received all this admiration, and wrapped himself around with an additional garment of "Douglass pride;" and when Honora spoke very gently of "Agatha's extreme youth," and the fear she had of "bringing her forward too soon," he replied "that the Douglass family matured earlier than most families. His mother was married at *sixteen*."

Two days passed, the fancy ball was accomplished, and the juvenile party and private theatricals followed. Colonel Clarendon rallied Agatha on her non-appearance at breakfast after this last performance, telling her "she would hardly fulfil a destiny like her grandmother if she gave out so easily."

Honora had a foreboding that something was wrong with Gregory. He had not been to the house since

their interview in the library, and after a sleepless night she begged her father—it being the third day of his absence—to send to his rooms. Isabelle laughed heartily at the idea, and Duncan Winchester hazarded the remark (aside to Agatha), that a young man above twenty-one should be capable of taking care of himself. The shadow of Gregory's last unsmiling look remained, and Agatha joined her entreaties with those of Honora.

A servant was immediately despatched to his lodgings, who returned with the startling, confounding intelligence, that Mr. Clarendon had not been seen there for three days. Now, indeed, raillery and smiles were exchanged for hearty sympathy and deep sorrow. Inquiries were set on foot; the police were put in requisition; every movement was made which a father's heart could devise, or a friend's affection prompt, but without success.

Honora walked her chamber, wringing her hands, agitated by contending hopes and fears. Isabelle sought to comfort her, but the sister looked at her imploringly. "Don't, Isabelle, please don't," she said; "you distress me. There is only One who can give me comfort in this time of suspense." Peace came to her soul, when

she could bring herself to feel that One eye neither slumbered nor slept, and that that eye was surely watching over Gregory with more than a human father's love. When the calm stole upon her own spirit, intent upon the comfort of others, she sought Agatha.

The child had thrown herself prostrate on the floor, and was convulsed with weeping. Isabelle and her brothers in vain had striven to soothe her hysterical sobbing, and Honora met with no better success. She was at length, by the advice of the physician, carried fainting to her own room. The gentlemen returned late at night, without intelligence of the absentee. They had no trace of him after he left the house where the Fergusons lived. Days went by with weary monotony; Providence had indeed given them a season of mourning and weeping. Agatha was confined to her bed with a low nervous fever, and Honora, between her bedside and endeavors to quiet the unrest of her poor father, found ample employment.

It happened, about a week after the disappearance, that Honora, leaving Agatha under the influence of an opiate, went out to attend one of the Lenten services. She desired to carry her grief to the house of God.

As she turned the corner of a retired street, a step near her caused her to look around. A paper was thrust into her hand, and she could only tell that the giver was a female. She opened the dirty scrawl as she took her seat in church. The handwriting was familiar. Her heart beat violently as she read:—

“If Miss Clarendon wishes to hear of her brother, she must meet me a half-hour before sunrise, to-morrow, at the east corner of ——— Street. Miss Clarendon need fear nothing if she is *secret*.”

In deep thanksgiving did her soul pour itself out for the life of her brother, and in earnest prayers for guidance. She had but one opinion about her duty in the matter of the communication she held with such a tight clasp. For her to meet by appointment, *secretly*, a notorious blackleg, on familiar and conversable terms, seemed to her positive sin, and she took the note at once to her father.

“God be praised he is alive!” he exclaimed eagerly, as he read the lines.

“Father,” said Honora, after much thought, “Agatha suggests that Chet might be of service in this search.”

“Certainly, certainly, daughter. Bless the child Agatha. Chet would be invaluable. I wrote to Mr. Clement to come to us. I will despatch some one for Chet.”

He had stepped into the hall, but, the door-bell ringing, he passed again into the library; he could not meet strangers. A well-known voice reached Honora’s quick ear, and, regardless of everything but her brother, she rushed forward to meet the Rev. Mr. Clement. Standing behind, with arms folded, as if doubtful whether he should come in, was Chet. This was no time for distinctions or conventionalities. Deep sorrow, like death, is a great leveller, and Chet was soon seated in the library, listening to the oft-repeated tale of Clarendon’s departure and non-appearance. When the ground was gone over, and the necessity of secrecy enjoined, Colonel Clarendon produced the letter Honora had given him.

“Who is this?” said Mr. Clement. “He writes like an old acquaintance.”

“He is that notorious scamp, Dick Walbridge,” said Colonel Clarendon, indignantly. “This is his way of showing gratitude to his friends. It is to him we owe this suffering.”

Chet instinctively put his hand into his bosom, saying, "He deserves to die."

"But not by your hand," said Mr. Clement, laying his finger on Chet's arm. "Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord."

"Yes, Chet," said the Colonel, "you must not let your hot blood get the better of your cool judgment."

Chet bowed, but did not speak.

CHAPTER XXX.

VILLANY UNSUCCESSFUL.

“ You must not think
That we are made of stuff so flat and dull,
That we can let our beard be shook with danger,
And think it pastime.”

SHAKESPEARE.

WE WILL now return to Gregory, whom we left in sad meditation. He proceeded on his mission to the lone dove, promising a child in a tenement near by something very nice if she would watch it well, intending himself to take it to Stella at Easter.

The entrance of the alley was very dark; the friendly lights did not penetrate its recesses. Gregory was wondering how anything as pure and refined as the Fergusons could have come out like the spotless ermine from so much filth, without a mark, and chiding himself for venturing at such an hour into the place, when a well-aimed blow from behind, but not a severe one,

struck him senseless to the ground. Returning consciousness found him in a small apartment in the upper story of a very high house. By his bedside sat a woman. The dreadful lines of neglected childhood and corrupted youth marked her countenance.

"Where am I?" he said, endeavoring to rise.

The coarse reply we will not repeat. It caused Gregory, with a strong effort, to raise himself and put the greatest possible distance between himself and the female. The high window in the roof, from which he could only see the blue sky, was heavily barred. He tried the door; that was secured in the same manner. His eye soon accomplished the survey of the apartment, and there, wherever he turned, sat that hideous object, grinning and mouthing at him. Robbery, he saw, was not the purpose of the attack upon his person, for his watch hung in its place, and his pocket-book was where he left it. "What enemy," he continually asked himself, "have I, that would dare do so bold a thing." Suddenly it flashed upon his mind that it was Dick Walbridge. Yes, he had removed the Fergusons beyond the reach of his violence, and this was Dick's revenge. He remembered, through life, wicked designs

planned by Richard, that he had frustrated. Presently he heard the hoarse voices of men in the passage, the bars were loosened, and the woman was called out. This was an inexpressible relief. To be imprisoned was severe, but to be shut up with such company was unendurable. "What can I do?" he said to himself, as he paced to and fro the narrow apartment. There was but one reply, "Nothing." With Clarendon's impetuous, determined nature, it was no easy matter to come to this decision. After contemplation and prayer, the first desire, to make Richard feel the force of an arm nerved with a sense of injury, passed away. The Christian arose superior to the man, and, committing his case to One whom his firm faith believed to be "the Ruler and Governor of all things," he sunk into a disturbed slumber.

Day succeeded day, with weary, lagging pace. Clarendon heard nothing from the outer world, except the rough voices of men in the passage, whenever the door was opened to admit the hideous woman who brought him his daily allowance of bread and tea. He had been tempted to try his single strength with the outsiders, but his better judgment prevailed, and he re-

mained quiet. He was surprised one morning, as he leaned wearily against the wall, gazing at the little spot of sky that was visible, by the footsteps of a man, after the unbarring of the door, and, turning his head, he at once recognized his visitor.

"It is to you, then, Dick?" he said, carelessly, "that I am indebted for this durance vile. This is gratitude for my sister's mistaken kindness. How long do you intend to keep me thus?"

"Till they pay well for you," said Dick, sullenly.

"A ransom!" replied Gregory, contemptuously. "Never!"

"Yes, but they must," said Richard, tauntingly. "I have you snug here, and they may mourn to their hearts' content. Besides," he added, "you crossed my path, and carried off my pet dove for your own purposes."

"Stop, Richard Walbridge," said Gregory, haughtily. "You ever had a false tongue. Solitude is preferable to your company."

"I am not to be put off thus," replied Richard. "You must write to your sister to meet me and pay your ransom, or she may weep her pretty eyes out for you, as she did for her lover, in vain."

The color mounted to Clarendon's brow, fire gleamed from his eye, but he checked the rising wrath, and walked to the other side of the room without reply.

"Come, none of this," said his companion, with a cowardly laugh; "write to Miss Nora to meet me, and I will tell her where to bring the money." He took pen and paper from his pocket, saying, "She will come if you bid her."

"Bid her meet you! Faithless, cowardly reprobate! Never! Your look would defile her!"

"I have looked on brighter faces than hers," he said, sneeringly. "But if you will not help me," he added, with an oath, "I must try what I can do myself, by crossing her path."

Alone again, Gregory was harassed by new fears. Perhaps Honora might risk herself with the hope of saving him. "O Thou who rulest and governest all things, in heaven and earth," he repeated, over and over again, fully realizing that it is one thing to say these words, and quite another to believe and *practise* upon them. Honora brought in contact with the wretch who held him in custody, was a thought that greatly aggravated his present misery.

The conference in the library at General Winchester's occupied a long evening. Colonel Clarendon was unwilling Honora should be brought out in this matter; and yet there seemed to be no way to meet the emergency but through her. Chet modestly assured him that Miss Nora would be safe under his protection. In physical strength he could match two or three like Dick. The first step was to disguise Chet. His homespun clothes were exchanged for a suit of the finest broadcloth, cut in the extreme of the fashion. A hat of superior finish and fabric, half-boots of patent leather, yellow kid gloves, a Spanish cloak about his shoulders, and a sword cane in his hand, transformed "the lord of the Gorge" into a figure that might well be envied by the pale-faced, miniature dandies who promenaded our thoroughfares and drink mint-juleps in our saloons. Chet was well acquainted with the streets of New York. Autumn and winter often brought him there with game from his rocky home.

With the first gray light of morning, Chet, in his new suit, approached, by a devious path, the place of meeting. By the straight course from General Winchester's, a little later, Honora Clarendon walked

thoughtfully. Now and then a policeman would pause, turn, and look after her. A thick black veil saved her the consciousness of being observed. As she approached the corner of the designated street, a man stood, apparently waiting for her. Casting her eyes on the opposite sidewalk, she was reassured by the sight of Chet, who was proceeding at a slow, negligent pace.

Richard approached when he saw he was observed. There is something in the presence of a gentle, Christian woman that awes for a moment the most hardened. His eyes sunk to the ground as Honora looked at him.

"Richard Walbridge, is this you?" she exclaimed; "and is it you that have caused such anguish in the hearts of those who have shown themselves friendly?"

"Your brother crossed my path," he said, fiercely; "not for the first time, neither, — he shall pay for it, — and I demand a heavy ransom, and you must bring it," he added, laying his polluted hand on her arm.

"Name your price, Richard Walbridge," she said, drawing back; "it grieves me even now that your heart can only be reached by money."

"Beware, Miss Nora," he said. "Do not rouse me.

Money I must have, money I will have, and you must bring it here. No, not here," he said, hurriedly, as a gentleman crossed the street and approached them. It was Chet, who came by, in an indifferent manner, passing so near Honora that her veil caught in his dress. He disengaged himself, bowed and went on. Richard turned and gazed after him, deceived by the disguise.

"Mr. Walbridge," said Honora, almost faint with excitement, "if I obtain money for you, some other way must be appointed for receiving it. These meetings are too painful."

The villain looked at her; she did not quail.

"Speak at once," she said, more boldly. "Name the price at which my brother must be ransomed. Let it be done speedily."

"You shall hear from me again," he said, — "to-morrow, perhaps. Is my touch so defiling, that you draw back thus?"

She escaped from him, almost fainting, disappointed with herself that she had proved so timid. She had accomplished nothing. All her heroism vanished, and she went home to weep bitterly.

When Miss Clarendon left Walbridge, Chet followed

at a distance till he saw him enter a low tavern in the suburbs of the city. He hesitated. Should he meet the rogue alone? He might lose all by one imprudent act. Five minutes carried him to General Winchester's; and, without waiting to explain, he simply said, "Gentlemen, if you will go with me, I think I can show you the rogue."

They came into the low inn as Dick, having hurried his morning meal, called for a room.

"Show the gentleman to No. 5," was the command Chet heard given to the slipshod waiter, and he followed, at a respectful distance. Before Dick had made fast the door on the inside, it was quietly opened, and Chet stood before him.

"Richard Walbridge," said he, slowly, never once removing his eyes from the young man, "tell me where you have hidden Gregory Clarendon. Other things I have to settle — Stay," he said, striking down the pistol that Dick pointed towards him, "this shall not serve you."

He drew his own trusty weapon from his breast, while he held the young man's right arm in his powerful grasp. By a quick movement, Dick regained his

own weapon, but it was discharged in the effort, the ball passing through the floor. The lithe and nimble Richard was no match for the stout arms of his antagonist, and he soon lay prostrate. The pistol-shot, however, brought the keeper of the house, and several men, to the spot. A carriage conveyed the rogue through the streets, accompanied by Chet and his friends, with a police-officer.

Finding himself in the worst, he sunk into dogged silence, supposing, of course, that they intended to deliver him to justice. They alighted, however, at the door of General Winchester's elegant mansion, and a council of war was held over the prisoner in the breakfast-room. Some of the parties were for delivering Walbridge at once into the hands of the law; but the uncertainty whether thereby they should discover the retreat of Clarendon held them back. It was at length proposed to the rascal, without leaving any alternative but imprisonment, that he should give them the knowledge of Gregory's whereabouts, and accept a free passage to Australia in a vessel about to sail for that port. He did not long hesitate. Liberty was dearer to him than revenge, and he gave them a

passport, in a jargon they could not understand, that liberated Clarendon; but the Australian mission was a failure. During the hurry and bustle of a large ship preparing for so long a voyage, the vigilance of both Chet and the officer was at fault, and the rogue escaped to his old haunts.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MATTERS AT ROCKRIDGE.

"They'll sit by the fire, and presume to know
What's done i' the Capitol; who's like to rise,
Who thrives, and who declines; side factions, and give out
Conjectural marriages, making parties strong,
And feebling such as stand not in their liking."

SHAKESPEARE.

"**L**OOK HERE, Deacon!" said Mrs. Dobbin, one chilly morning in early spring, as she pushed up her spectacles and clapped her hands, as if she had heard some news of an exceedingly interesting nature. "Look here, husband! Ann 'Tildy, just poke the fire, and sit down while I read you this. This will make their ears tingle!"

The obedient Ann 'Tildy seated herself at once near her mother, eyes and mouth saying plainly, "I am listening!"

The paper from which Mrs. Dobbin read was one

which good people condemn, for its notorious habit of insinuating against the characters of the upright, and its delight in dishing up disgusting gossip to suit the palate of the fastidious. The Deacon took the paper for its *politics* and its extensive circulation. Mrs. Dobbin fed her love of scandal from its columns, and chuckled over its detailed accounts of delinquent ministers and depraved fellow-Christians.

“MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE!!

“For some days, our city has been moved by the sudden disappearance from our midst, of a young gentleman, a student of theology, belonging to a highly respectable family in a neighboring town. For five days he has been seen neither at his rooms, nor by any of his circle of distressed friends. The police, though (as usual) active in the matter, have failed to discover his whereabouts. A certain notorious gambler is suspected of spiriting away the young clergyman. It is rumored that the gentleman crossed the path of the rogue in some affair!”

“There!” exclaimed Mrs. Dobbin, when she had finished the paragraph. “This must be young Claren-

don! It is astonishing how young men behave when they get to New York! A minister, too! Well, I'm glad he ain't one of our sort!"

"Tom Ridgway says," replied the Deacon, as if the matter had been fully discussed by the lords of creation, in the centre of newsdom, — "Tom says, that good-for-nothing Dick Walbridge is at the bottom of this!"

"Well, now, I wonder how Tom knew?" said the amiable spouse. "Them Ridgways think a sight of Tom. I dare say he's no better than he should be! To think of his marrying that New York girl, with her stuck-up airs, when he might have had his choice of the pretty girls at home," she said, looking at Ann 'Tildy.

She was interrupted in her judgment upon Tom Ridgway by the entrance of his sisters. Receiving them as her "dearest friends," she rallied Eliza on her pale looks, telling her they were "mighty becoming."

"She may well look pale," said Julia, untying her bonnet-strings, evidently preparing to stay; "she has done nothing but lament the fate of Clarendon, since the news came. I say it serves him right for bringing another set of beggars into Rockridge. Father

says this family that have come to the Gorge are miserably poor and helpless, and withal so mighty grand! I hate grand poor folks! Then here is Mr. Clement urging Eliza and me to call upon them! If Tom's wife chooses to make a fool of herself in this way,—and you too Eliza,—you are welcome, but you need never ask me to go!" she said, tossing her head, and throwing down her outer garments.

"Sister," replied Eliza, without looking up from her crochet-needles, which she had already taken out, anxious to preserve her reputation for industry, "you know I told you my reasons for calling. Mr. Clement's wishes ought to be a sufficient motive, certainly, in so slight a matter."

Julia shrugged her shoulders, and looked knowingly at Mrs. Dobbin.

"They say," said Mrs. Dobbin, in her shrill voice, "that these folks are English. Their name is Ferguson, any way. Ferguson was Mrs. Douglass's maiden name. It aint possible they are any relation, is it?"

"Of course not," replied Julia. "Mr. Douglass never was fond of his poor relations. He and the Clarendons are so thick, he must have known of their

coming, and have prevented it, if he did not wish it."

"Have you seen Papsy?" said Mrs. Dobbin, turning to the girls so suddenly as almost to startle them.

"No indeed," they replied eagerly. "Have you?"

"Yes; the Deacon and I felt it to be our duty to go. You know, Chet has taken her home; she's dreadful sick, and hardly speaks to anybody. Your Mr. Clement was there when we called. I asked the poor thing if she knew what a sinner she was; but she never made me even a nod for an answer; but she's going, I guess, where she can't get away from that question."

"Will she die?" inquired Julia.

"I think so," replied Mrs. Dobbin, with indifference; "you know her mother died, not much older than she, a poor miserable thing."

While in the midst of this talk, Tom Ridgway came to secure the company of his sisters for his first call with his wife on the Fergusons. Julia refused to go, decidedly. Eliza hesitated, between her fear of compromising her dignity and her desire to do something which would recommend her in the eyes of young

Clarendon or the Rev. Mr. Clement, it was immaterial which ;—a clergyman she had long ago decided the happy man must be. The latter motive prevailed, and she accompanied her brother to the Bird's Nest, Miss Julia congratulating herself upon the prospect of finishing the talk with Mrs. Dobbin without the presence of a third person.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE DISCOVERY.

"There are some happy moments in this lone
And desolate world of ours, that well repay
The toil of struggling through it, and alone,
For many a long, sad night and weary day.
They come upon the mind like some wild air
Of distant music, which we know not where
Or whence the sounds are brought from."

HALLECK.

THE HOUR was fixed for the return of Colonel Clarendon and his daughter to Woodland Bluff. They had many pleasant memories of their visit. Galleries of paintings, the studios of artists, rooms of statuary, and private collections of fine arts, had been freely opened to Colonel Clarendon. He had enjoyed, too, the society of brother officers, and lived over with them the stirring scenes of soldier life. Honora, though her yearning for home had been constant, could not leave persons with whom she had lived for several

weeks without a shade of sadness. She had, with great difficulty, persuaded Mr. Douglass to allow Agatha to return to Rockridge with her, provided the child herself wished it. Her strength had not been restored since her illness, and physicians advised quiet and rest. Her uncle, immersed in the gayeties of a city life, needed, perhaps, an excuse for his strong desire for amusement, when he assured Honora he remained there himself "wholly on Agatha's account." His pride had been flattered by the impression she had made with the Winchesters. He was a man of the world,—shrewd, planning, far-seeing. It had occurred to him, when he had seen the devotion of the young Winchesters to his niece, their evident admiration of her, and rivalry with each other for her hand in the dance, that, in due time,—Agatha was now fifteen, and his mother was married at sixteen,—it might be well to secure so fine a prospect for his adopted daughter as the wife of the son of the wealthy, distinguished, and aristocratic General Winchester. That there are such planning fathers and mothers, who take many "a long look ahead" for their children, is a truth that every one's observation will corroborate. The matter, however, of

Agatha's immediate return to Rockridge was left with the child herself, and, with her innate strength of character, she decided that energy and vigor were dearer to her than all the smiles and adulations of her new-found friends.

It was really charming to see Honora once more in the cottage at Woodland. She went over the rooms again and again, as a child goes over a familiar picture, discovering new beauties continually. The little conservatory Gregory had built for her with his own hands was full of choice plants that had been tended by a careful hand, and promised plenty of bright blossoms for Easter.

There had been changes, even in Rockridge, during the few weeks of Honora's absence. Tom Ridgway had bought a piece of ground next Mr. Douglass's estate, and was building an Italian villa. Chauncey Douglass was still at Maple Cliff, living the life of a recluse.

Honora found Papsy, feeble and suffering, with a meek, blue-eyed babe on her arm, whose influence on the child-mother was like the gentle dew on the opening flower.

"O Miss Nora!" she exclaimed, as Miss Clarendon

put out her hand to take the baby, "good out of evil, — God has done it, — Papsy sees it now."

Robert Walton was still a visitor at Woodland. He had been but once into the open air, and was remanded by a sharp pain in his chest; however, he had gained strength, and with prudence, Dr. Woodbury said, he would be prepared for his journey when spring opened.

As soon as it was practicable, Honora and Agatha visited the Fergusons in their new home. They were full of grateful thanks for the blessings that surrounded them. The few articles of furniture were arranged to the best advantage, and the father's arm-chair — a remnant of better days — stood in the corner of the tiny parlor. Over the mantel-shelf was a picture Honora had never seen. Agatha's attention was attracted by it at once, and as she gazed Catherine remarked, "That is a sketch of our home over the water. We value it as the work of our mother."

Honora noted the deadly paleness of Agatha's cheek, and the trembling of her limbs, and led her to the arm-chair, apologizing by speaking of her recent illness and probable fatigue. Six months before, Agatha

would have openly told the cause of her agitation, but she was growing into womanhood, and gaining in self-control.

As soon as they reached home, she threw her arms about Honora's neck, crying, "It must be, it must be. The Fergusons are Mr. Walton's father and sisters."

Miss Clarendon acknowledged the proofs were strong, as Agatha told the tale of the two pictures. Colonel Clarendon was sanguine that it might be as she felt it must be. Childlike, Agatha was exceedingly desirous to communicate to Walton the joyful news, and after many cautions, she hastened, with a flushed face and beating heart, to meet the object of her solicitude.

He welcomed her into the conservatory by saying, "I am glad to see you, dear. I was wishing for some little person who could get on those steps and reach me that tiny cape jasmine. But, my precious child, what has happened?" he added, observing the alternate glow and paleness that came over her cheek.

All Agatha's set speeches vanished. "You remember," she said, with downcast eyes, — for she did not dare trust herself to look him in the face, — "you told me about your home and your sisters. I have thought

of them continually, and longed to restore them to you. You never told me their names," she added, somewhat perplexed lest she should divulge the secret before she was quite sure of the result.

"God bless you for thinking of them!" he said musingly. "Their names," he added, — "names that I have breathed only in prayer, — Catherine and Stella."

"They are found! They are here!" exclaimed Agatha, fairly jumping up and down with excitement, "Catherine and Stella Ferguson!"

Walton looked at her a moment, with an expression of wondering doubt; and then, a deadly paleness spreading over his face, and beaded drops of sweat standing on his forehead, he whispered, "Agatha, you would not trifle with my feelings. What can you have heard? I must not be disappointed," he added eagerly. "No, it cannot be," he said, sinking back, fainting, into his chair.

Agatha's composure returned with his agitation. She told him at once, in a calm, straightforward way, the story of their discovery and removal to Rockridge, closing with the account of the two pictures.

"How unworthy am I of this blessing!" he ex-

claimed, raising his eyes to heaven, — “coming, too, in the end of life to soothe my last moments.”

“O Mr. Walton!” said Agatha, eagerly, “you will be better now, you will have such a sweet home, so near to all you love.”

“The ways of Providence how wonderful!” he replied. “God has kept me *here*, in spite of all my uneasy, restless longings to get away; and all to bless me in the end with blessings for which I had hardly dared hope! But I must go,” he said, rising, though scarce able to stand; “the blessing is within my reach, — I must seize it.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE COQUETTE.

“ Mine eyes

Were not in fault, for she was beautiful;
Mine ears, that heard her flattery; nor my heart,
That thought her like her seeming.”

SHAKESPEARE.

“ And thou, O thou didst throw

That crushed affection back upon thy heart!”

MRS. HEMANS.

GREGORY CLARENDON walked the customary round of duties after the departure of his friends, and endeavored to excuse himself, as week after week went by without a call at General Winchester's. But his conscience was not easily quieted, and one drizzly afternoon found him at the door of that hospitable mansion. He was well known, and received by the servants as one of the family. The door of the breakfast-room stood ajar, and he ventured to take the liberty which he had often done, of looking at a fine old

painting that hung there, before joining the family in the library. He flattered himself he would be more genial, and better-natured, for a few moments spent in communion with the great artist. He gently pushed the door, then drew back instantly, but not till he had been observed.

By the writing-table sat Isabelle, her raven locks unbound, and flowing in long curls over her neck and shoulders. Her dress was an elegant *négligé*, and her tiny foot rested gracefully on a hassock. The table was covered with dainty notes of many sizes, mostly sealed with wax of a cerulean tint; under her right hand was a miniature, and in her left she held an open letter, which had evidently produced not the most pleasing impression, for her long lashes were heavy with tears.

"Come in, Mr. Clarendon," she said, hastily wiping her eyes. "You find me, like the day, weeping, and in negligent attire: but I am troubled, and you may be able to help me."

Gregory came in at her bidding, but did not take a seat. "If I can help you, Miss Isabelle," he said, "I shall be happy to do so, but I must apologize for my intrusion."

"No apology is needed," Mr. Clarendon, she replied quickly, "if you will only be seated, and exercise your benevolence on my case."

"I fear yours is a case that does not come within my power," he said, with a slight shade of irony in his tone.

"If you cannot help me," she replied, sadly, "you can at least pity me. Read that!" she added, giving him the letter she held.

"Pierre McLellan!" he exclaimed, in a tone of surprise as he glanced at the signature. "Pierre McLellan in New York!"

"Pierre, when you knew him, was worthier of your friendship than at present. But read," she said, somewhat imperiously; "I am eager for your advice."

Gregory read, and the varying shadows that passed over his face were like the reflection of the clouds on the bosom of a lake before a summer shower. He finished his rapid reading without a word, Isabelle watching him closely, and moving her foot impatiently.

"And you trifled with such affection as this!" said Gregory, as he folded the letter with a sigh.

"No," replied she, moved by his sorrowful tone,

“not trifled: he was no more to me than a score of others. But I pity him,” she added, hesitating, “because—because he seems so crushed by it.”

“Then you would not utterly ruin your victims,” said Clarendon, sarcastically, “only bring them very near the precipice!”

It was a cutting speech, and he felt sorry for it as it passed his lips. Isabelle was touched,—her face flushed crimson, and her lip quivered, as she said, “Gregory Clarendon, you despise me; but am I to blame, because—to blame for—”

“To blame only,” he replied, more kindly, “for not being true to yourself. A true woman seeks not to slay her thousands, but reserves the wealth of her affections for one only.”

“But can we do anything in this case?” said Isabelle, earnestly wishing to impress upon Gregory her desire to retrieve the consequences of her coquetry. “Can anything be done for poor Pierre?”

“I must look him up,” he said, gravely; “the poor fellow must be strangely broken down to write thus; his mind is evidently shattered.”

“You will hardly find him in any respectable place;

he has lost caste completely," said Isabelle, "and I beg you will not again expose yourself to danger. What would my brothers say, if they knew that he presumed to send me this?" she added, passing the miniature.

Gregory took it in silence. Yes, there was Pierre,—the same delicately pencilled features, the same classic head, the same speaking mouth; and this man, honorable, devout,—this thoughtful, generous friend,—was transformed, by the siren smile of the coquette, into a weak, passionate man, lost to self-respect, and to the respect and confidence of others. The letter told the tale. He had met his charmer in New Orleans, and she with her peerless beauty had fascinated him. The passion, nourished in his heart by months of intimate intercourse in the sunny South, had so completely unmanned him, as to render him only an object of pity.

"I will seek him, till I find," said Gregory earnestly. "He endeavors to drown in dissipation the remembrance of the past; but you see by his letter his heart is not in it. Pierre I must find!" he added, as he rose to go.

Isabelle held his hand in parting, and said in her sweetest tone, and with real emotion: "Don't peril

yourself, Mr. Clarendon ; I am grateful for your assistance, but I shall feel continually anxious if you put yourself in such company." Her beaming eyes were fixed full upon him, and as she spoke, large tears dropped slowly.

Gregory was forced to reply, "Thank you, Miss Isabelle, but my former misadventure has made me so notorious, that it would be unwise to try tricks upon me. You need fear nothing," he added, as she again pressed his hand, and renewed her thanks.

General Winchester's family were taken by surprise, when Isabelle informed them at tea, that Mr. Clarendon had spent the afternoon alone with her in the breakfast-room.

"Ha ! sister mine," said her brother Duncan, "I congratulate you more than all on this conquest : the siege has been equal to that of Troy. But I've no patience with the cold dignity of this sprig of divinity."

"Probably because he treats you with such silent contempt," said Isabelle.

"Or his meddlesome interference with the little Agatha," said his brother.

With Gregory, a subject of particular interest was

always so absorbing as to drive all little things from his mind, and he soon forgot, in the intensity of his desire to help his friend, the peculiar look and tone of Isabelle at their last meeting.

His nature too had been chastened and subdued by a power beyond himself, and he had learned to admire earnest well-doing, better than the most brilliant charms. Nevertheless, she had played her game well, and the strong desire she had expressed to help Pierre had left the impression on his mind that she was not altogether heartless.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

PIERRE McLELLAN.

"To raise the devil were an infant's task
To that of raising man."

"Some souls lose all but the love of beauty,
And by that they are redeemable;
For in love and beauty they acknowledge good,
And good is God."

FESTUS.

TO FIND McLellan, and to rescue him from a life of degradation, was now the earnest wish of Clarendon. His first step was to obtain the assistance of the police. Many notorious gambling-houses were visited, and weeks passed without any success. Clarendon was ready to believe that Pierre must have left New York. He had written to him urging him to come to his lodgings, but had received no reply. At length, the search was successful: the officers of justice had made a descent upon a notorious gambling-saloon, and cap-

tured several of the occupants, among whom was a young man answering to Clarendon's description of McLellan.

Gregory proceeded to the station-house, and there discovered his former friend, the same, and yet changed. He had won largely during the evening, and there was a fiendish glance of triumph in his brilliant eye; but Gregory, with the far-reaching penetration of a friend, read misery in those compressed lips, and clutching fingers. How utterly useless for a moment did all efforts of man for his guilty brother appear to Clarendon, as he gazed upon one he had once regarded with the respect of friendship, now bound and led captive by a deadly vice!

At the sight of Gregory, the countenance of Pierre changed, the wild eye and impatient gesture gave way to a look of mingled remorse and despair. It was with some difficulty that Clarendon persuaded the young man to accompany him; but the earnest heart and strong will prevailed, and together they went to Gregory's rooms. Clarendon led his companion at once to his bedchamber, bidding him rest, assuring him that he was too wearied to talk that night; and returned

himself to his study. Several letters had been brought in during his absence. He glanced hastily at them, and they were laid by with one exception, a letter from home,—the superscription was Agatha's. It must be owned, however, that he paused a moment over a daintily perfumed note, sealed with blue, and then, with the slightest possible curl of the upper lip, accompanied with the play of a lurking smile, he placed it with the others, and, breaking the seal of Agatha's, read as follows:—

“ROCKRIDGE, March, 18—.

“DEAR, DARLING COUSIN:—

“I know you will be delighted, when I tell you that the Fergusons are Robert's relations. I wish you were here to see how happy they are. You laugh at me for weeping so easily; but we should have seen your tears, I know, if you could have been present when dear old Mr. Ferguson, who always makes me think of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, folded Robert in his arms and cried over him for joy. Catherine was calm as a summer morning. I told cousin Nora, she would make you a good wife; you liked *calm* people.” (Here Gregory shrugged his shoulders and smiled.)

“Cousin told me, I must never pick out husbands and wives for persons, but let them make their own choice; and then she gave me a lecture, — no, not a lecture, a talk, about proper subjects of thought and conversation. I told it over to Stella Ferguson afterwards, and she said it ought to be printed. I love Stella, dearly, — better than anybody but you and Cousin Nora. When I look into her eyes, it seems as if I was looking right into a fresh violet. And I hope uncle will not forbid my going with her, when he comes home.

“Brother Chauncey, who has grown very odd and sober, told me to-day, that he had purchased the old farm-house covered with woodbine that stands on the brink of Oak Bay. He will have no more to do with uncle, and means to leave Maple Cliff next week.

“The Judge and his wife are to keep house for him. I laughed at him about his choice of company; he said, he did not wish anybody he must entertain.

“I expect to see you frown, when you hear how disrespectful I was to Mr. Clement yesterday. Your father laughed, because I said, he was like Miss Morgan, and I wished he would marry her, so that uncle

need not ask her back to teach me. I was sorry afterwards, because it grieved Cousin Nora. What a foolish little-girl letter I am writing! but you told me to write just as I would like.

"Papsy comes to see Cousin Nora often; she is not as she used to be. Mr. Clement has christened her baby, and she and Rosa and Chet are to be baptized Easter even.

"I hope you will be here at Easter.

"This long sheet is filled, mostly with nonsense. Have I worn out your patience?

"Your affectionate little

"AGGIE."

"Worn out my patience! no indeed, darling," said Gregory, as he closed the letter; "there is something reviving in the freshness of your thoughts." He took up the pretty, dainty note, and, carefully opening it, read:—

"NEW YORK, Tuesday Eve.

"MY DEAR MR. CLARENDON:—

"I am so anxious for the effects of my imprudence in exposing you to danger, that I beg you will report

yourself soon at my father's, and relieve my anxiety, which last night would not suffer me to sleep.

“Very truly yours,

“ISABELLE.”

“I shall take care of the victim first,” he said, as he heard a groan from the adjoining room, at the same time indignantly throwing the note into the fire.

In the morning interview with the broken-down Pierre, Clarendon learned from his own mouth the course of his temptation and fall. To remove his stricken friend from the scenes of his guilt and the object of his affections, was the first thing to be done. Gregory looked upon him as an insane person; and his sunken eye, and the nervous twitching of his fingers, showed the absence of accustomed stimulants. Where could he be sheltered and cared for, till the balance of his mind could be restored?

Like the vision of a sure haven of rest, away from temptation, came the farm-house of Chauncey Douglass. Bachelor's hall, too! It was not many days before that gentleman answered a summons from Clarendon, by appearing at his rooms in New York. The plan

was talked over together, and in the presence of Pierre, he only begging that Clarendon "would not leave him alone."

Chauncey consented to receive him as an inmate at the farm-house, provided he was in no way accountable for his well-doing. Books, fishing and hunting apparatus, drawings, and music, were provided for the young man; and Clarendon had the satisfaction of seeing him depart with Chauncey,—all having agreed that a profound silence should be maintained about him, and Douglass insisting that he would consider him as his friend "De Lue."

During his next call on Miss Winchester, Clarendon took occasion to tell her that Pierre was in a safe place, and doing well; politely evading all her inquiries as to his whereabouts.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SELF-CONQUEST.

“Wilt thou find rest in thy returning
To that old path thou hast so vainly trod ?
Hast thou forgotten all thy weary yearning
To walk among the children of thy God ?”

IT WAS midsummer, and the hot breath of the steaming city gave Clarendon a longing for the cool breezes of his Highland home; and he was to leave town to-morrow. He must first do his father's bidding, which he had already deferred too long, and renew the invitation to the Winchesters to pass a month at Rockridge during the season. He blamed himself that he could not give the invitation heartily; sadly ungentlemanly and unhospitable was it in him, but he did begrudge the quiet walks with Honora, and the refreshing converse of Agatha, which he knew he must renounce during their stay. He could not but be relieved when the invitation was accepted for the

month of August, and not immediately. He found on his return home that Mr. Douglass had taken no step to recall Miss Morgan, and Agatha and some half-dozen girls of her age, among whom was Stella Ferguson, were pupils of Mr. Clement. There had sprung up between these two, Aggie and Stella, one of those girlish friendships, of which earth offers no equal for perfect confiding trust and love; and the arrangement was perfectly delightful to them. Agatha stood perhaps more in awe of her teacher than of any other human being; and now that he assisted her progress in intellectual knowledge, a distant friendship was growing daily between them. There had been no time of trial. Fond of study, and quite as urgent to progress as her instructor was to put her forward, she had as yet received no reproof.

It happened, one bright day in July, that Gregory walked out, designing to meet Agatha on her return from school. He was blessing his ancestors for the double row of elms that shaded the street of Rockridge, when Mr. Clement came out of the Rectory gate. The gentlemen greeted each other, and Clarendon inquired for Agatha.

The clergyman's face wore a perplexed and grave expression, as he said: "I am sorry to say that Miss Agatha is in disgrace. She has displeased me exceedingly, and the matter has gone so far, that I must either give up my authority, or — resort to severer measures; probably expel her from school."

Gregory did not speak for a moment; at length he said: "Mr. Clement, I cannot tell you how grieved I am for you in this trial; and for this child," he added. "May I ask the nature of her fault, making my interest in her an excuse for the question?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Clement. "This morning, during the recitations of the second class, I looked at Agatha, and found she was *reading* instead of *studying*; this is a breach of the rules of the school. I requested her to bring me the volume. She hesitated, till I repeated my request for the third time. She then arose, and, with a violent ebullition of proud temper, threw the volume on my desk. It was a book written with modern infidelity on every page. Had she given me the volume in a quiet way, I should not have spoken of it before the school; as it was, I told her at once that I must forbid her

reading it at any time. She was exceedingly angry, answering me very impertinently, and positively refusing to study or recite. I did not dismiss her with the young ladies, but have just finished a conversation with her, that has had no more effect than if I had spoken to the wind ; while her friend Stella was drowned in sorrow, begging her to submit, urging her to apologize. She must give up this will, or I shall send her home, not to come back without a public apology."

"You are right, Mr. Clement," said Gregory, in a sorrowful tone. "Agatha will yet mourn over this burst of passion with a bitterness that will be as great as her temper has been violent. If you had known her when she came to Maple Cliff, you would see how much she has gained in self-control in the last year and a half. She was a perfect little firebrand, ready to light and blaze at the least spark."

"She has had kind friends," replied the clergyman, "in Miss Clarendon, Miss Morgan, and yourself."

The gentlemen had walked together during the conversation, and now stood at the entrance of the Gorge.

"You know this little miss better than I do, Clarendon," said Mr. Clement. "Do you think she will be more likely to return to her duty, if I keep her where she is, or send her home?"

"Send her home, by all means!" replied Clarendon. "Liberty is necessary that she may fully realize her position."

They parted again at the Rectory gate, Clarendon going towards home. He knew that Agatha, in her present state, would soon overtake him. It was not many minutes before he heard the light, quick step. He turned and took her hand; instinctively she felt that he knew all. Neither spoke till they came to the entrance gate at Woodland Bluff, when Gregory led her gently to a garden chair in the thicket of shrubbery.

"Tell me all," he said, drawing her towards him.

She did not once raise her eyes to his, as she went through the story in a low, determined tone, blaming Mr. Clement in the severest manner for taking a book from her that her uncle had given her to read. She had learned her lessons, and was disturbing no one. "And now," she added in the close, "he wishes me

to apologize! Apologize! That is something I will never — ”

“Stay, Agatha,” said Gregory, placing his finger on her lips. “Your tongue is impelled by a rebellious spirit. Look me in the face as you used to do, and I can soon tell how much of what you say is indeed the real sentiment of your heart, and what is the result of anger and wounded pride. Agatha,” he added, more gravely, “it is long since you have had such a test of the earnestness with which you struggle with self. How I wish you would let me help you!”

She made no reply, and a long silence ensued. At length Gregory spoke:—

“Poor wandering soul! I know that thou art seeking
Some easier way, as all have sought before,
To silence the reproachful inward speaking,
Some landward path unto an island shore.

The cross is heavy in thy human measure,
The way too narrow for thy inward pride.”

He paused in his repeating, for her head had sunk upon his arm, and she was weeping. He did not seek to restrain her tears, but led her backward to past resolutions, and forward to new hopes.

“Dear Cousin Gregory,” she said, still sobbing, “I

shall never conquer! What shall I do? What can I do?"

"Do you really wish me to tell you how you may conquer?" he said. "Perhaps I shall require more than you will consent to perform. Do you still wish me to tell you, dear?"

She gave a token of assent.

"Raise your head, then, and rest it here," he said, laying his hand on his shoulder, "and I can talk with you."

"No, no," she replied in a despairing voice. "I shall never be—I am not worthy to look up."

"Worthiness, Agatha, is not for us mortals," he said, raising her head by his superior strength, till it rested where he wished. "You ask me to tell you, then, what I think you should do; how you may conquer this enemy of your peace," he said, looking for the first time into the depths of those brown eyes. "Your first object, my child, will be to recall the gentle Dove, who had begun to nestle in your heart, and who is driven away by passion, pride, and wilfulness. Humble yourself deeply and entirely before God. You can never be sure, however, that the wilful spirit is sub-

dued, till you are ready and desirous to humble yourself before your justly offended fellow-man. I would advise that you see Mr. Clement ere you sleep. Try to realize your relations to him, your duty to submit to his authority, not only as your teacher, but your spiritual pastor. It is due to Mr. Clement that you should freely confess to him your sorrow and shame, — of course, I know you will say nothing that you do not really feel, — and then you are to submit willingly to any punishment he may appoint for your offence. Can you do all this, Agatha?"

"I will try," she said in a low voice, followed by a deep sigh.

"God bless you, my child," he replied. "Be sure, if you do all this, you will, in time, come off conqueror of yourself, by the grace of God, through Him that loves us."

One hour before sunset found Agatha at the Rectory. Mr. Clement was out, but she resolutely resolved to wait his return. He was deeply touched by the ingenuous sorrow of her repentance, and the earnest simplicity with which she sought his forgiveness.

"My daughter," he said, affectionately, "you are fully and freely forgiven, and I wish it was in my power wholly to remit your punishment."

"No, sir," she replied quickly, struggling with her feelings. "My offence was public, and I feel that my apology should be the same."

"I will make it for you, Agatha," he said, much affected; "and I feel, my dear child, that this will be the only time I shall be called to fulfil so painful a duty for you. You will be helped by a Divine power, if you persevere in the course you have commenced."

He then talked with her affectionately of the path of the Christian's life, and of the many helps he has, that are nowhere promised to those who will not seek the appointed means of grace.

Having prayed with her, and given her his blessing, she departed, half resolved at once to overcome her scruples, and seek admittance into the fold of the Church.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE MASTER OF MAPLE CLIFF.

"His days are spent
In chaining down his heart, and watching when
To rise by human weaknesses. His nights
Bring him no rest, in all their blessed hours."

WILLIS.

MR. DOUGLASS, occupied, as he had been the year past, in the gayeties of foreign and city life, could not readily settle down into the old humdrum course he led during Mrs. Douglass's days. There was, besides, a fearful reckoning going on in his own conscience, and solitude was unendurable. To drown thought, he had contracted a wonderful intimacy with Tom Ridgway. The young lawyer had rendered him valuable service in establishing his claim to the property in Scotland. The Italian villa, too, rested on the slope between Maple Cliff and the village, and Tom's wife was agreeable company. Thus it came to pass, that

Mr. Douglass, who had kept himself aloof from everything at Rockridge, found congenial society in a family whom he had previously despised.

The room occupied by his wife he had never entered since his return. There were papers there that should be examined, but Mr. Douglass was a coward, and feared to meet the rebuke of the departed.

Now and then the idea of a second marriage flitted across his mind, but his good sense told him that *money* could be the only object of such a union with him. At times he meditated the recall of Papsy to his lonely and desolate home, that he might have one over whom he could exercise unlimited authority. But, unprincipled as he was, he would not risk a renewal of Agatha's intimacy with one who had proved herself so weak. With regard to Papsy's having become religious, he ridiculed the idea, as he did all Mr. Clement's efforts for the Gorge and its inhabitants.

The master at Maple Cliff sat smoking in the library, one August morning, with his friend Ridgway. He was mourning with that gentleman the dulness of country life, when Agatha came running in from the greenhouse, almost wild with delight, exclaiming, "They

are coming! they are coming! I saw the carriage driving into Woodland Bluff! I am so glad!" And she skipped up to her uncle, and asked, "Are not you glad, that the beautiful and brilliant Isabelle, and her gay brothers, are come to town?"

"Yes indeed," he replied, more heartily than usual. "There's a woman worth looking at, Tom," he added, at the same time casting a glance at the mirror, that reflected a fine set of teeth, and aided him in adjusting his black wig.

"Agatha, my daughter," he continued, "a part of the Winchesters' visit, of course, will be with us. Do you feel competent to do the honors of the house?"

"O, uncle!" she replied, looking towards Ridgway, as if she wished him at home. "If you would let Stella Ferguson come and stay with me, we could manage beautifully. She knows how to do all sorts of things!"

"Stella Ferguson!" said her uncle; "pray who is she? I heard Clarendon speaking of the Fergusons. Where do they live? For my part I have lost the run of the comers and goers in Rockridge. There's that friend of Chauncey's," he continued, addressing

Ridgway, "I never heard of him till yesterday. De Lue did you say was his name?"

"Yes," said Ridgway, rising to go. "Rather cracked here," he added, putting his hand to his heart. "I'll bring that dog up to-morrow," he said, as he closed the door.

"Ferguson! Ferguson!" said Mr. Douglass, looking uneasily at Agatha. "Where did this family come from? What do you know about them, child?"

Agatha felt a little vexed by her uncle's tone and manner, and disinclined to continue the conversation. But he persisted in knowing all, and presently she had given him the information.

"Then Gregory Clarendon imported them from the streets of New York!" said Mr. Douglass, in a tone of bitter sarcasm. "The young man might have been in better business! But it is clear, child, from your account, that they are not people I should choose for your associates. As you are alone, I am willing you should have this girl here occasionally, but I am not willing," he added, raising his voice authoritatively, "that you should visit them, and mix with such low people!"

“Low people!” said Agatha, rising haughtily, and stamping her little foot, while her eyes flashed with the anger that threatened to overcome her; but the next instant she sunk upon the sofa, and bowed her face in her hands. Mr. Douglass retired at once,—a weeping woman he could never endure. Agatha was very angry; it did seem cruel, very cruel, to deprive her thus of the society she so much loved. It was unjust, too! “The Fergusons low people!” The expression would rise continually. Hours after, when her uncle sent for her to call on the Winchesters, she overcame the pride and rebellion that would have bid her decline the walk, and went out to meet him with a smile.

Cordially were the Winchesters welcomed at Woodland Bluff and Maple Cliff. Tired of admiration, wearied with a continual round of hangers-on, Isabelle was now where in her heart she had long wished to be. The unsubdued human affections reach out often for that which is beyond their reach. Isabelle, with scores of lovers at her feet, turned with an unresisted yearning toward one who had come within the charmed circle of her witchery, and gone free. Now

she was under the same roof. Intimate intercourse would follow, and she must succeed. With her fortune, she could place the object of her choice in an elevated position ; without her, he would probably be only a country clergyman, of very limited means. Thus and thus did she meditate, as she went to rest in the oval chamber in Woodland Cottage.

Mr. Douglass's thoughts, after he had retired for the night, arranged themselves somewhat in this form : " Now I will make my plans. To-day has convinced me that Duncan Winchester is really charmed with Agatha. I suspected it before. I must find employment for the other brother, — three spoil love-making. Stella Ferguson ! — I don't like the name. Agatha says she is well-bred ; I will bring her here for these few weeks. General Winchester will hardly thank me for introducing his son ; however, a flirtation will not hurt him. Yes, Agatha is very young, but she and Duncan would make a pretty couple ; the two fortunes, — they would be immensely rich. They might marry after an engagement of a year or more, and I could take them the tour of Europe. Agatha gave

up finely to-day ; she is getting subdued. I'll bring this girl Stella here to-morrow ; visiting the Fergusons need not follow. She said they were English. *She* was Scotch, but then her brother Frank married an English girl. How *she* begged me to look after them. The papers would shed light on his age. What if this old man is her brother, turned up under my nose ? Why should I trouble myself ? No, I'll help these pleasant people enjoy themselves. I don't like all this drilling the child Agatha into religion. This Clement — impertinent fool ! — to advise me about her reading, as if I intended to help him and Clarendon make the child believe something I don't believe myself. Isabelle is splendid ! If I was only twenty years younger, I'd defy Clarendon and his aspirations. Ridgway ! nice, clever fellow, drinks good brandy, and smokes fine cigars, and has a mighty charming wife ; but these boring sisters of his ! How I do hate low people ! I wish that brat of Papsy's would die, — I'd do something for the girl. *She* used to say — I wonder what she said when she was dying. Hush ! what noise ? How foolish, nothing ! Hush ! I hear her cat-like step. There it is again !

I *was* cruel! Good God! what is it? This is dreadful! I will strike a light."

Thus hour after hour of darkness went by, and but little rest came to the soul of the miserable man. By day, the proud, domineering worldling; by night, the coward sinner, anticipating his doom.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE SERENADE.

“How beautiful is all this visible world!
How glorious in its action and itself!
But we who name ourselves its sovereigns, we
Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
To sink or soar, with our mixed essence, make
A conflict of its elements, and breathe
The breath of degradation and of pride.”

BYRON.

A SERVANT was despatched with a note from Agatha, inviting Stella to pass the vacation at Maple Cliff. Her friends, innocent of any suspicions of Mr. Douglass's motives, gladly gave their consent. At the same time, this gentleman very hospitably urged the superior accommodations of Maple Cliff, and the society of the young ladies, as a reason why the Winchester brothers should make his house their home during the visit: this invitation was also accepted.

Gregory and Honora were annoyed by this arrange-

ment. They considered Agatha as a child, but saw that, in the present plan, Mr. Douglass had thoughts of his child's future. She would be thrown into daily, hourly companionship with a person upon whom they had no doubt her uncle looked as her future husband, but in whom they could only see a frivolous, half-educated, fashionable young man. They regarded her as entirely too young to think of so near a relation with any one.

Mr. Douglass's plan succeeded to a charm, so far as pairing off the young people. Stella, two years older than Agatha, much taller and larger, gentle in her manners, and very lovely, was an interesting companion for Dudley; while Duncan, in his first flush of manhood, was really enamored with the bright brown eyes and roguish look that continually thwarted all his attempts at love-making. There were parties of every description,—for riding, walking, berrying, sailing, and dancing. Mr. Douglass and Colonel Clarendon exerted themselves to the utmost for the entertainment of their guests; and as the guests were *moving* people, motion of some sort was the order of the days and weeks. There were no quiet, sober talks between Gregory and Agatha, and scarcely between Honora and her brother,

except they sought the early morning hours, before the family arose. These precious moments were often interrupted by Isabelle, who seemed to possess an instinctive knowledge of Gregory's whereabouts. She did not appear intrusive, but came in so naturally, and apologized so prettily, that Clarendon accused himself of vanity and uncharitableness in thinking she planned to meet him. These days could not be said to be days of enjoyment to either Honora or her brother; they had tasted of higher pleasures, and these soon lost their charm.

The stay of the Winchesters was drawing to a close, and Isabelle was spending the last week at Maple Cliff. Sitting in the window of her chamber, after the family had retired, she seemed nearer the goal of her wishes. She was becoming interested in things that interested those she loved. She was conforming in externals to the stricter notions of her friends. That day, she had ridden to the Gorge with Gregory, to select a site for the chapel, talked of for so many months. But little was collected towards its erection; but faith was to lay the corner-stone. On her return, Isabelle had delicately placed in Mr. Clement's hands a sufficient sum

to finish the building, in the original and beautiful design; and for this act she received from Gregory a look of admiration, and a warm pressure of the hand, that well repaid her for the sacrifice. The moon was at the full, and the whole scene from the window of her bedchamber, was suggestive of peace and repose.

From the river a curling mist arose, which concealed the village, leaving the tree-tops visible, like islands in the midst of a wide sea, and the tower of the old church, with its gilded cross, seeming in the pale light like a huge rock, with the precious sign on its summit, a beacon-light to the tempest-tost.

Woodland Bluff was between Isabelle and this phantom sea; the quiet beauty of its cottage contrasting with the bold bluff on which it stood. How did she long to know that there was one beneath that roof dreaming of her! A rustling in the shrubbery caused her to draw back from her position in front of the window, and presently there came floating on the evening air the sound of a flute, soft and melodious. Was it the melody alone that caused her hastily to pull down the blinds, sink into her seat, and weep bitterly? The chords that fell so sweetly on the ear brought

wretchedness and misery to her heart. There could be no mistake; she had listened to those tones under brighter skies. The memory of the past came with agony to her soul; companionship with the good and upright was doing its work. The next morning found her in a state of nervous excitement, but returning day brought the hope that no other ear had caught the music of the night.

A fishing party had been proposed for that day, got up by Tom Ridgway. Fishing-grounds were numerous about Rockridge, but none with the capacities of Oak Bay. For some reason, which no one pretended to understand, Gregory stoutly set his face against that place for the day's pastime. He gave no particular excuse for this "freak," as Duncan Winchester called it, and Honora wondered that he cared enough for the place to say so much about it. He was overruled, however, by the other gentlemen, and Oak Bay was decided upon. Clarendon looked grave when he came over to Maple Cliff to make arrangements for the party. Agatha rushed to him, and in her old eager way, with a slight twinkle in her merry eyes, asked him if he made the beautiful music she heard during

the night in the shrubbery. Isabelle attempted to silence her, but Gregory insisted upon hearing her innocent description of the kind of music, and her earnest declaration, that "she thought it must be he, serenading Miss Isabelle."

Gregory looked graver than before, and immediately walked on to the balcony. Isabelle hesitated; it was an unmaidenly act that suggested itself, but she must risk something, and she followed.

"Mr. Clarendon," she said, in a low tone, "you would pity me if you knew what I have suffered. I would do anything, be anything, to cancel the effect of my wickedness." She sunk down into the carved seat, and hid her face.

"Isabelle," said he, kindly, "there is only one thing you can do. Cease coquetry, cease flirtation. Be what you may be, what you should be, a Christian woman."

"I will," she said, earnestly.

He gently drew her trembling arm within his, and walked across the balcony till she had recovered her calmness, and then led her back to the company.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE FISHING EXCURSION.

“To know all human skill, all human strength,
Avail not ; to look round and see
The mountain wave incumbent with its weight
Of bursting waters o’er the reeling bark,—
O God ! this is indeed a fearful thing !”

SOUTHEY.

THERE WAS a great gathering for the fishing party, and boats of all sizes and orders. The day was a true *dog-day*, — hazy, sultry, cloudy, the sun occasionally struggling through the clouds with burning heat. In the boat with Gregory were Miss Isabelle (of course); Chauncey Douglass, who had joined this party solely with the desire to look upon the beauty that had caused the fall of Pierre; Tom Ridgway and wife, with Chet at the helm. Agatha, to the annoyance and discomfort of Honora and Gregory, was thrown, as if by accident, but really by the

arrangement of her uncle, into a small sail-boat, with Stella and the brothers Winchester.

A better fishing day could not have been chosen. Noise and merriment were there, and sometimes quiet, reflective fishing, with a loud scream and hurrah, at each successful haul, from the young people. Now and then the boat in which were Agatha and her young friends would pass near Gregory, convincing him by their movements that they knew nothing of its management. Once when they came suddenly across the bow of his boat, he requested the young men to take Chet to steer for them, but they scouted the idea of danger, and went boldly down the bay, the breeze bearing back to Gregory's ears the song which Duncan, with his rich, musical voice, was carolling:—

“Here let my home be,
On the waters wide:
I roam with a proud heart,
Aggie's by my side.”

The intense heat of the sun added to Isabelle's nervous headache, and she looked wretchedly. Mrs. Tom Ridgway suggested that it would be kind to

carry her to the shore, and proposed to remain with her ; but this Gregory knew would displease that lady's husband, and he landed himself with Miss Winchester. He really felt pity for the mental suffering she was enduring, and exerted himself to relieve her.

It was an unfortunate position for Clarendon, as they sat together under an overhanging bluff, crowned with willows, that dipped their long branches to the very water's edge. Miss Winchester was relieved by the cool shade ; and the conversation naturally turned to Pierre and the serenade, and she expressed herself completely subdued and humbled by the remembrance of the part she had acted. Gregory pointed out the farm-house on the opposite shore, the home of the poor, demented McLellan. They talked of life, with its joys and sorrows, and Gregory became interested in her frank avowal of the utter folly of her past days, with her resolutions for the future.

"But I have no one to counsel me," she said, sorrowfully ; "no mother, no sister !"

Gregory was about to speak of the true source of help in all efforts for the right, as she continued in a

low tone : "If I had one like you, Mr. Clarendon, to guide me, I might hope that my endeavors would not utterly fail."

Gregory was silent. He was thinking whether she could mean anything particular, when she proceeded : "You will despise me, Gregory, — you will have a right to despise me, — when I make known to you the truth that is burning in my bosom. I know the forms of society, maidenly reserve, common modesty, are against me. I determined to commit my secret to you, — to throw myself on your generosity. I know your noble nature will not betray me. O Clarendon ! if you could look into my heart ——"

"Miss Winchester," he replied, rising coldly, "I must not permit you to say more."

"O Gregory !" she said, passionately seizing his hand as he turned away ; "do not leave me thus ! Do not cast me off as accursed ! Do not *hate* me !"

"Isabelle," he replied, somewhat softened by the intensity of her emotion ; "sit down, and let me speak reasonably with you. Your secret is safe ; but, as a man of honor, I must tell you plainly, once and forever, that what you wish can never be !"

“You love another!” she said, eagerly looking into his face, for a confirmation of her suspicions.

He did not reply, but turned coldly away from her searching glance. At that instant her eyes were directed to the bluff above, and, uttering a wild scream of terror, she fell fainting to the earth. Clarendon’s attention was recalled, and he bore her in his arms to the water, calling to the boat in which were Honora and his father, with the General, which immediately headed toward the shore. Gregory, explaining the fainting as partly the result of fatigue and headache, resigned Isabelle into the hands of her friends, and, mortified and distressed, sauntered down the beach.

He was disgusted with Isabelle, vexed by his own uneasy, restless state of mind, and troubled about Agatha and Stella. He could discern, far down the bay, the boat in which the thoughtless young people were sailing away. The clouds were gathering, and presently came the sound of distant thunder; but it did not alarm the fishermen and women, so intent were they upon their pleasure. Gregory walked around the bend of the bay, and now the probabilities of a heavy shower were more apparent. The wind was rising,

and he hurried back, shouting to Chet, and all who were within hearing, that they would hardly have time to land before the rain. The wind, at the same moment, came rushing down the Gorge, and across the bay. Every vessel was instantly headed for shore. The breeze bent and swayed the tall forest-trees, and carried the leaves about in wheeling eddies. The skiff manned by the brothers Winchester made no headway; wind and current were both against them, and the gust rent their sail into ribbons. The first row-boat that landed its passengers, was seized upon by Clarendon, and he put off to the rescue. Chet followed, in a second boat, but he had made but few strokes with his oars, when another gust struck the little sail-boat on her side, and she was instantly capsized.

Intense terror ran through the watching group on shore. Every man that could find oars and boat was instantly on the water, while the horror-stricken women stood on the beach, longing to help, but powerless; the rain pouring in torrents from the leaden-colored clouds, the thunder pealing and rattling around them, with vivid flashes of lightning that made the after darkness more terrible.

The strength of a giant nerved Gregory, and he was first at the spot where the vessel went down. Chet had come to the assistance of Dudley and Stella, who were swimming towards shore ; and Chauncey had picked up Duncan, with his right arm disabled in the accident. But Agatha, the child Agatha, was nowhere to be seen. Clarendon's presence of mind did not forsake him. He laid down his oars, and looked into the waters, as if he would pierce their very depths. There was not a word from the group of boats that gathered round. Presently, not a rod from the bow of his boat, floating down rapidly with the current, Clarendon discerned the form he was seeking, just rising to the surface. Instantly he was in the water, and before the deadly element closed again over those brown curls, his right hand, with a grasp for life or death, bore her above the waves.

He held the lifeless girl in his arms, and motioned Chet to row to the farm-house. Chauncey, Mr. Douglass, and Honora followed, while the company returned, with saddened hearts, to the homes they had left that morning so joyously. Duncan Winchester was in a sorry plight. His fractured arm, and the

knowledge that by his foolhardiness the prize just within his reach was snatched forever from him, rendered him miserable.

All the customary means of resuscitation were used upon Agatha, but without success. Chauncey stood over her, his hand on her heart, to note the least pulsation; Gregory watched continually for the first flutter of the eyelids; but watched and waited in vain. Clarendon had not spoken, till Dr. Woodbury pronounced her beyond reach of assistance; then he raised his eyes, and, in a hoarse voice, said, "*She must live.*"

Other urgent calls the physician had, and after hours of unwearied exertion, he left, giving all needful directions to Honora, in the event of a change, saying as he went out, "It is of no use."

Mr. Douglass walked the room with hasty strides, continually reproaching himself as the cause of the trouble. Hope had almost died out of the heart of Honora, though she still labored on, supported by the earnest efforts of her brother, in the use of means. Gregory's countenance denoted settled sorrow; when the very faintest possible sigh came from that breast that had so long lain in the stillness of death. Honora

was faint with joy, while Gregory was completely overcome with the revulsion of feeling from despair to hope. By much persuasion, Mr. Douglass was induced to return with Chet, to give the joyful intelligence that there was hope to the waiting hearts at home, while Honora kept watch, with her brother, over the slow-returning life.

It had grown dark; the wild waves, lashed by the angry winds, came tumbling and roaring down the Gorge, into the bay. Shower succeeded shower through the night. Flashes of lightning, followed by quick, sharp reports, came in rapid succession. Mr. Clement came down, amid the storm, to offer his assistance and sympathy, and to comfort their fainting hearts with needed prayers. Long after midnight they watched and waited for the first look, the first word. Pulsation was restored feebly, the breath was low and short, regained by fearful struggles, and life still hung by a gossamer thread. Gregory observed a slight movement of the lips; he stooped over the pale form, and whispered, "Agatha."

"No, Duncan," she replied, very faintly, striving to remove the hand that held hers; "don't speak of it.

"I am only a child,"—and she tried to laugh her gay, brilliant laugh, but it died in a gurgling sound.

"It is as I feared," thought Gregory; "they would deprive you of your girlhood, burden you thus early with the cares of life. It *shall not* be!"

As the morning sun came forth, clear and cloudless, the drooping child, aroused more fully, opened her large eyes, and gazed around till they fixed themselves upon Gregory, who sat by her side; and then came slowly back the remembrance of the last waking scene. She made an effort to raise her head, but could not lift it from the pillow; but reaching out her arms, she clasped Grégory tightly to her heart. It was the embrace of a soul returning to life and love.

Her friends would not suffer her to speak, but gently soothed her into a quiet slumber.

Now Honora could look out on the devastations of the tempest. Trees were torn up by the roots, and shivered by lightning. The bluff on the opposite shore was blasted, and the willows that overhung it lay stripped and dead beneath it.

Pierre had been forgotten during the excitement of the previous evening, and it was found, on inquiry, that

he had not been seen since an hour before the storm. Agatha was sleeping quietly, and Gregory walked out to breathe the morning air. Presently Chet appeared on the opposite shore, accompanied by two men, bearing a burden from beneath the willows, where Clarendon had sat with Isabelle.

Like a flash came the thought to Gregory and Chauncey, as they watched the scene, that it was the body of Pierre. They were not mistaken. He had been found where the willows had been shivered by lightning, dead many hours. Chauncey discovered in the breast-pocket of his coat a slip of paper, on which was written with a pencil:—

“I have seen thee, loveliest, fairest of them all! Yes, I have seen thee, carried in *his* arms. *He* is worthy of thee, thou peerless one! I give thee up,—yes, give thee up to *him*. Fond heart, lie still. Clarendon is all goodness, all honor, and I sacrifice to his love what is dearer than life.

“Beautiful! thou art more than beautiful. Heaven can contain no brighter presence. Farewell. The storm comes on, and I may not stay. Peace be about thy pillow! Poor Pierre will never disturb thee! Once more, farewell.”

“Poor fellow, how mistaken!” said Gregory, looking Chauncey full in the face. “Were you deceived also, Chauncey?”

“Never!” replied the young man, decidedly.

A crowd was assembling, attracted by the news, and they hastened into the house, lest Agatha should be disturbed.

As Pierre had been to the last a Roman Catholic, Gregory thought proper to send to Ridgeville for the Romish priest. This act of common courtesy magnified itself, in the eyes of many of the good people of Rockridge, into an offence against Protestantism, so little is the spirit of toleration, or forbearance, understood.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE OFFER REJECTED.

"He hums and he hankers, he frets and he cankers,
You never can please him do all that you can,
He's peevish and jealous of all the young fellows."

BURNS.

"One hour hath passed — and o'er the deep blue sky
A dimness hangs, whose chill is in my heart;
The wind with funeral moans goes sweeping by,
And asks in every whisper, where thou art."

ISABELLE AND her restless brother were an unhappy pair. She had humbled herself for naught; and now, in the midst of her intense feeling of shame, came the news of Pierre's sudden and awful death, to add the bitterness of remorse to her sense of degradation. They were to follow their father to New York as soon as Duncan's arm was in a state for the journey. Mr. Douglass was irritated because the Doctor would not say that Agatha might be removed to her home, and spent his time in rapid rides between

Maple Cliff and the farm-house. On one of these occasions, he had said to Agatha, that "Duncan Winchester was savage as a bear, because every one but he that had the best right could see her, and he had engaged Chet to come after her in a few hours." Gregory overheard the remark, as he stood near the sofa where she was reclining. He felt the changing color in his own cheek, and saw the disturbed blush that lighted Agatha's pale face.

When Mr. Douglass went out, Clarendon sat down by her side, and said in as calm a tone as he could command: "Agatha, is Duncan Winchester correct in supposing he has the best right here?"

She looked at him, questioning whether he was in earnest in his inquiry.

"I would they had kept you a child," he continued, in a disappointed manner. "I would they had left you the freedom of girlhood, untrammelled by such words as Duncan has whispered in your ear."

"They were not pleasant to me," she replied quickly. "I am vexed and annoyed that Duncan will not understand that his professions are displeasing. I will be 'little Aggie' still; I have no wish to be a woman,

and Duncan Winchester *must* desist!" she added, in the old positive way.

"He shall desist!" said Clarendon, earnestly; "you shall not be thus annoyed!"

"Perhaps," she replied, the blush spreading over her face and neck, "he may mean only to tease me. I have sometimes thought so."

"If he speaks thus to tease you," said Clarendon, "it is ungentlemanly, and should be stopped: if he is serious in his addresses, though but a child, you have a right to answer for yourself, and if he is agreeable, simply refer him to your uncle."

Gregory forced himself to make this speech, as a matter of duty. It came very reluctantly, and he was frightened when he saw how the thought sent the blood from her cheek.

"Never! never!" she said, earnestly. "Uncle and all the world cannot make me marry a man I do not respect."

"Spoken like a noble girl!" said he, drawing her towards him. "But you are weary; rest here."

She lay like a tired child, resting her head on his shoulder, till the sound of her uncle's carriage-wheels were heard on the beach.

"They are coming," she said, raising herself, and speaking in a sad tone. "Gregory, I wish I may never see Duncan Winchester. Is that wicked?"

"Poor child!" he replied, soothingly. "Speak as decidedly *to* him as you have *of* him, and I think he will not trouble you; if he does —"

Mr. Douglass and Honora entered with Chet at this moment. The shawls and cloaks were wrapped about Agatha; and Gregory, in spite of Mr. Douglass's motion to Chet, took the little girl in his own arms, and placed her in the carriage.

Agatha's youthful vigor soon returned, and in a few days she met the family as usual. Duncan still lingered, determined to make one desperate effort for the prize he had so well-nigh lost. Dudley had returned home with his sister, with the memory of a pair of violet eyes that haunted him pleasantly. The day after his departure was the commencement of one of those chilly storms that sometimes darken the month of August. The rain beat against the panes, and the wind tore off the multiflora that covered the library windows. Agatha reclined on the sofa that had been drawn towards the fire by Gregory. He had just left

her for church ; it was St. Bartholomew's day, and Agatha was wishing, as she watched the bright embers, that the church had chosen some other day for the saint, when Duncan Winchester walked in. She rose from her recumbent posture as he came forward, apologizing for his intrusion.

"No intrusion, certainly, Duncan," she replied ; "the library is free to the family."

He sat down, and examined the pretty work she held in her hand.

"It is my birthday," he said, — "to-day I am out of my teens, — *twenty* to-day."

"More than four years older than I," said Agatha, innocently.

"Just the right difference in our ages," said the young man, blushing.

There was a pause, and Agatha, fearing something she dreaded, attempted to leave the room ; but he would not suffer her to rise, but plainly asked her consent to speak to her uncle of an engagement.

Once she felt inclined to laugh at the idea of her thinking of marriage at her age, but she replied very properly : "Duncan, you have spoken thus before, but

I could not think you were serious. I am but a child. I do not wish to think of what you propose. I wish to be *free, free* as a bird, at least till I leave school."

"But you are not free," he said, hastily. "Do you think I cannot read Clarendon's course during and after the storm. But you must be mine. Your uncle favors *me*," he added, a little softened. "Give me one word of hope."

During the first part of this speech, Agatha listened; but when he spoke of Clarendon and the storm, she drew herself up haughtily and left him in solitude.

"There! I have finished the matter now," he soliloquized. "Why need I have spoken so warmly of Clarendon? His long *tête-à-tête* call this morning vexed me. I am afraid it will take many days of humility on my part to bring this proud little thing to terms. I'll speak to Mr. Douglass, rouse his suspicions of Clarendon, though really I believe this managing young parson has no idea of Agatha, except as a child of whom he wishes to make a saint, like himself. I like her spirit, — a spice of temper gives variety. I am really sorry I said that about the storm. It seemed to strike deeper than I intended."

In the evening Agatha was summoned from her chamber to the library. There was a presentiment that caused her to tremble as she stepped across the hall. Her uncle was walking the room, as usual, with hasty strides, his hands in his pockets. He placed a chair for his niece.

"My child," he said, in a voice more gentle than she had ever heard from him, "young Winchester has been with me for the last hour, pleading for an engagement with you. You are very young, Agatha; but that need not be a reason for refusing his hand. I would be glad to see you married, and settled on your own estate, after an engagement of a year or two. With your united fortunes —"

He was checked by the very ghastly look of Agatha's face. As soon as he paused, however, she spoke in a voice struggling with emotion: "Don't speak of it, uncle, please don't speak of it. Mr. Winchester is not agreeable to me, even if I were old enough to marry."

"Agreeable, child! and why not, pray? He is young, handsome, sensible, rich, and of good family. What more can you ask? The objection you make

for yourself is growing less every day. You hardly know your own mind. You shall have time to think of it, but I can tell you this is not an every-day chance."

"I need no time to think of it, uncle," she replied, with downcast eyes. "I could never marry Duncan Winchester; I have neither love nor respect for him."

"Agatha Douglass," said her uncle, rising, his kind manner vanishing, and he towering above her. "Look me in the face, and tell me instantly, what does this mean?"

His terrible manner frightened the poor child out of the power of speech.

"Answer me! What am I to understand?" he said, in a voice like the sound of distant thunder, at the same time taking her very roughly by the arm. "This, then, is the meaning of all this devotion," he added, finding she did not speak. "It is for this, that I left you and Clarendon together at Oak Bay? Agatha, Gregory Clarendon shall rue the day he saw you!"

"Uncle," said the little girl, recovering herself from the state of astonishment into which she had been

thrown by her uncle's accusations, "Gregory Clarendon saved my life, and I owe him a debt I can never repay; but you have mistaken his feelings. He regards me only as a child, which I am," she added, clasping her hands and weeping bitterly. "Why will you not let me be your child, your Aggie? Do not deprive me of my girlhood, and make me —"

"Artful girl!" exclaimed her uncle, fixing his sharp, spectacled eyes upon her; "you know you are speaking false!"

All Agatha's resolutions of self-control gave way, amid the storm of indignation that followed this direct falsification of her word, and she burst forth into bitter, burning words against her uncle for his neglect in her training, at the same time telling him that, if there was any good thing in her, it was the result of the Clarendons' influence. She might have gone on to any extent, but she had drawn out with her handkerchief a card, on which Gregory had written, "He that ruleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city." One glance of her eye over it, and she sunk down, overwhelmed with the thoughts of her want of self-control. Mr. Douglass stalked out of the room, livid with rage.

Duncan Winchester left for New York in the morning, and in the evening Mr. Douglass journeyed with Agatha towards Baltimore, where she was placed at school, in a convent near that city. She was prevented from leaving even a farewell for her friends, so peremptory and rigid were her uncle's commands. Clarendon was deeply distressed at the turn of affairs, and confided to Honora his suspicions as to the cause of this sudden movement of Mr. Douglass. Maple Cliff, with its closed windows and doors, was very desolate, for the master had broken up the household, and gone on a Western tour.

Gregory was glad when the last sad week of vacation was at an end, and he could return to his studies. The remark he had made to Honora, before his first call upon Agatha, came with stinging freshness to his mind: "What better, sister, is life at Maple Cliff, than with the Sisters of Charity. It would not take me many hours to choose between these two states of life, if I had a *protégée*."

CHAPTER XL.

THE RECTOR'S MARRIAGE.

"Let me not die before I've done for Thee
My earthly work, whatever it may be.
Call me not hence with mission unfulfilled;
Let me not leave my spot of ground untilled;
Impress this truth upon me, that not one
Can do my portion that I leave undone."

IT IS necessary that we return for a while to our friend, Miss Charlotte Morgan, an exile from her friends, deprived of the religious privileges she prized most highly, and the daily companion of a thoroughly worldly, niggardly old woman, whom she could not leave after having once established herself there. Disease had rendered her relative nearly helpless, and ill-temper had driven from her all but mercenary attendants. It may be supposed that Charlotte did sometimes look back with longing to the dear society of Honora; but the resolute performance of daily present duty led her forward to the one aim of her life.

Charlotte made no acquaintance in Spring Valley, except among the very poor, whom she visited in the midst of her aunt's continued opposition. During the month of July, she heard by accident of a family without the village, friendless, and struggling with sickness and poverty, and her steps took the direction of the humble cottage for her afternoon walk. In reply to her knock at the door, it was opened, and two fair arms were about her neck in an instant, and her tears were mingling with those of the gentle Anne Walbridge. Then she saw plainly, as if it had been a revelation from Heaven, the Hand that brought and kept her at Spring Valley, when she would gladly have sought a more congenial home.

She found the broken-hearted father in the last stages of consumption, meekly resigned, but longing for the sympathy and blessing of a brother clergyman. Not many days after the discovery of her friends, Charlotte, by Dr. Walbridge's request, wrote to the Rev. Mr. Clement, begging his presence at the dying bed.

In the mean time, old Mrs. Freeman, Charlotte's aunt, in looking for her will, having heard the rumor that Charlotte had come on as her *heir*, had fallen,

and injured herself past recovery. The niece watched and tended her captious relative like a daughter; it never suggesting itself to her truthful mind, till Mrs. Walbridge mentioned it, that she could be suspected of worldly motives in her labors.

In a short time her letter was answered by the arrival of Mr. Clement. He looked inquiringly on Charlotte's pale face and thin figure, when a voice from an inner room said, captiously, "Do bring him in, I have n't seen a minister these *ten* years."

It needed but a short stay by the bedside of Mrs. Freeman, to convince Mr. Clement of the life of self-denial Miss Morgan had endured for the last six months.

Dr. Walbridge had sent for his brother clergyman, to give into his charge his daughter Anne. Mrs. Walbridge, more indolent and self-indulgent than ever, seemed relieved at the thought that her child might be provided for without her exertion, while she could return to the paternal roof.

Mr. Clement, disposed to do all for the child that he could, consistently with other duties, promised to direct her education and care for her for the next three years,

when she would be able to help herself. After administering the consolations of religion to the dying man, he returned to his parish, leaving Anne under the watchful guidance of Miss Morgan, till death should separate her from her father.

The mutual care of this child led to a correspondence which resulted in a better acquaintance, and before autumn the engagement of the Rev. Mr. Clement to Miss Morgan was made public.

Colonel Clarendon smiled and half sighed, as he said, "Poor Agatha; she was the first to make this match."

Charlotte's duration by the uncomfortable couch of her relative did not continue into the autumn. The poor creature died, as she had lived, clutching the bunch of keys that lay on her pillow.

Her will gave Charlotte the sum of one hundred dollars, while the remainder of her large property was deeded to a wealthy college, into whose coffers the miser pours his hoarded wealth, to make himself a *name*, when he can keep it no longer.

In answer to a letter from Honora, begging her to come to Woodland and prepare for her marriage, Charlotte released herself from Spring Valley, and, with

Anne, who was now her particular charge, came again to Rockridge.

There was only one spirit in the parish that openly rebelled against the matrimonial engagement between the Rector and Miss Morgan. All the devotion of Eliza Ridgway to the little dirty children her pastor had given to her class; all her zealous endeavors to win attention, by her earnest talks about religion; all her eloquent admiration of the preacher's talents; all her *tête-à-tête* conferences, in which she had feelingly regretted the low state of religion in the parish,—all was in vain; he had not been won; he was positively engaged,—to Miss Morgan, too! the poor governess,—when Eliza's portion of her father's property might have been his! "What infatuation! what ingratitude!" thought the damsel, as she entered the house of Mrs. Dobbin, to talk it over with her dear Ann Matilda.

We must now pass over many months of the existence of our friends at Rockridge, with but brief notice. Charlotte Morgan, quietly married, at Michaelmas, in the parish church, was settled in the old Rectory, the people never having united on the spot for the new one. Anne Walbridge, separated from her weak mother, and under the invigorating guidance of her

kind guardians, was putting forth characteristics that had before lain dormant.

The Bird's Nest, with its patriarchal head and reunited family, presented a picture of quiet domestic bliss. Catherine supported her father by designing, in which she was assisted by Robert, who, though feeble, was suffered to enjoy, on the borders of life, the blessings of home and friends. Stella still received, through the generosity of the Clarendons, the benefit of Mr. Clement's instructions.

Chauncey Douglass often left the solitude of the farm at Oak Bay for a call at the Bird's Nest, with game and fish for the invalid. It was rumored among the gossips that there were other attractions; but none who knew the pride and haughtiness of his nature gave credence to the reports.

Early in the spring following Agatha's departure, the first green grave was made in the chapel yard at the Gorge, and in it was laid Papsy's little Harry, in all his innocent beauty; the young mother mourning deeply for the bud thus broken, although Mrs. Dobbin said, "She ought to be thankful it was dead," and Miss Eliza Ridgway gave her opinion, that "It was a great mercy."

Gregory Clarendon gave himself wholly to study, hardly taking time for necessary recreation. He made no effort to communicate with Agatha. After his lessons upon submission to rightful authority, to tempt her to disobey would be a poor sequel to his instructions. It was a hard lesson to submit to this restriction,—to know nothing of one for whom he had cared so deeply,—but the discipline of severe study prevented his brooding over events he could not control. His ceremonious calls upon General Winchester's family consumed but little time. Isabelle excused herself, and Duncan met him with a haughty, contemptuous bearing, that he sometimes found difficult to brook. During the winter Mr. Douglass had come to the Winchesters, and plunged into every gayety of the season. Isabelle, soured and disappointed, worn with excitement and dissipation, bore on her face already the lines of her life. She had lost that sparkling, bubbling flow of spirits; or rather it was changed into bitter, cutting sarcasm, that cast its arrows right and left indiscriminately. Her train of admirers was not diminished, but they were no longer the young and the noble; they were the shrewd man of the world, the worn, the cold-hearted.

CHAPTER XLI.

ST. ANNE'S.

"My soul is like a bird, my flesh the cage
Wherein she wears her weary pilgrimage.
The keys that lock her in, and let her out,
Are birth and death; 'twixt both she hops about,
From perch to perch, from sense to reason,
Then from higher reason down to sense again.
From sense she climbs to faith, where for a season
She sits and sings; then down again to reason;
From reason back to faith, and straight from thence
She rudely flutters to the perch of sense."

QUARLES.

IN THE mean time, while Isabelle was reaping the fruits of her undisciplined, self-indulgent life, Agatha was under the supervision of the Sisters of St. Anne's. Her first feelings after being torn from her home were those of indignation, but they were saddened, softened, by the memory of the grief she knew must be in the hearts of those she had left. The assiduities and kindness of her teachers soon brought out

her affectionate nature. She had here opportunities for improving her education ; and, exceedingly fond of study, earnest and hopeful, she did not long mourn over the past. Protestants justly fear Romish schools for their children ; but it is not by argument or discussion that their young minds are impressed, but by the novelty, and the beauty of the self-denying, devoted lives of the Sisters. Agatha, however, had seen the "higher life," as exhibited in the daily walk of the Clarendons and Fergusons, who, "though in the world, were not of it." She made many pleasant acquaintances during her stay at St. Anne's, but her dear Stella was never forgotten for the daughters of the noble families of Maryland and Virginia. More than two years of Agatha's life were spent in this house. To none would two years bring more changes than to the girl from fifteen to seventeen. Her figure increased rapidly in height, and to the graces of girlhood was added the roundness of womanhood. The quiet, even discipline of the convent served to strengthen her in the principles of self-government. During her long sojourn, she left the place but once,—a vacation spent in Washington with one of her schoolmates. Her uncle visited

her occasionally; but she could obtain from him no information of those she loved best. He could tell her of General Winchester's family, of Isabelle's attractions, or Duncan's advancement to a post of honor; but from Rockridge he brought only one piece of news, — that Julia Ridgway had eloped with the village school-master. "Whether they were married," he added, "was a matter of uncertainty."

One lovely afternoon in April, Agatha walked the terrace at St. Anne's in mournful contemplation. Her uncle had been there the week previous, and brought her intelligence that had cut off from her hopeful nature the thought she had always cherished, that her own earliest friends would some time be restored to her. Her father had lost his life in his search for gold, and her only sister had died from the effects of the climate; but sadder yet to Agatha was the news of her mother's hasty second marriage, in that far-off land. All this had served to add to the melancholy that was slowly creeping over the natural joyousness of her young heart. The monotony of convent life had become tedious, and her affections reached forth for something beyond those walls. She had been

watching the brilliant panorama before her. The velvet green of spring had tinted the broad lawn that swept away to the banks of the bay. The city, in the dim distance, with its many sparkling domes and spires, shone like a diamond set in emeralds of living green. The sun was sinking behind the horizon, and golden and purple shadows played over the surface of the blue waters. Agatha leaned her head against one of the massive pillars that supported the balcony. Her heart beat to the pulsations of sorrow, when a gentle hand was laid on her neck, and a soft voice whispered, "Daughter, you are sad. Can I comfort you?"

"No, sister," replied Agatha, "I am homesick; my heart yearns for my long-absent friends."

"The world then still looks lovely to you, daughter?" was the reply. "I hoped that to one so earnest for the right as my darling Agatha, the consecration of her life to her loving mother, the Church, might have some attractions. Yes, the world is beautiful, and friends are very dear; but oh!" she said, clasping her hands over the crucifix she held, and raising her eyes to heaven, "there is a brighter world, and dearer watching friends,—a world that never grows

old, and friends that never fail." Agatha sunk upon the neck of Sister Clarice, and sobbed violently.

"And you long to leave us, dear child?" she continued, soothingly; "perhaps the time may come sooner than you expect; and when you are gone, and the world's waves beat over you, and temptations assail you, and your frail, unguided bark is driven hither and thither, Sister Clarice will still pray for you, and you may even then turn to the shelter the Church offers you, and be at rest."

"It may be *too late* then," said a solemn voice from behind; and a tall, gaunt female figure, dressed in the long black uniform of the sisters, swept on without another word. Sister Clarice held the trembling form of Agatha to her heart in silence.

For the last year, finding themselves unmolested in their efforts, the nuns had sought to win to the bosom of the Romish Church one so promising as Agatha. They had first endeavored to alarm her with the danger of living unbaptized, and begged her to receive that sacrament at the hands of a priest, assuring her that all her friends would consider that valid baptism. They had rendered her uneasy and unhappy, though

they had not gained their point. She was wrestling sorely with the temptation to take this step, which was represented to her as the only one that would secure her salvation, when there came a summons to her from the Lady Superior.

Did the deep flush that overspread her features, as she sunk into a chair, after she had heard the commands of the Superior, denote pain at the intelligence that her uncle lay at the point of death; or joy, that the bondage she had begun to *feel* was about to terminate?

A messenger would convey her to New York by the first train of cars. She had not given a thought as to who would be the probable person whom they would send for her, and her indignation was visible in the haughty manner with which she met Duncan Winchester. They had both changed, certainly in externals, since they parted. His dress and appearance bespoke him a man of the world,—one who had seen good society,—and the look of admiration with which he met her was somewhat modified by her cold greeting.

From Duncan she learned, after the first distance had worn away, that her uncle had spent a winter of

dissipation,—proper, fashionable dissipation. He was leading a dance with Isabelle, at a fancy ball, when he was seized with the illness that promised to be his death, of the nature of apoplexy.

Agatha was prepared for her uncle's appearance, but she was shocked when she met Isabelle. The brilliant bloom was gone from her cheeks and lips, her eyes had lost their mellowness of expression, and in its place was a sharp, withering look. She was very thin, and her voice and manner were cold and repelling. Nevertheless she made an effort to meet Agatha kindly, and looked down into the depths of those pure eyes with a look that made her blush and turn away.

"Aggie, my child," she said, when they were alone; "did Duncan tell you that you and I were to be related by marriage if —"

"Never," said Agatha, in her old proud way, drawing herself up to her full height, which was by no means contemptible.

"Hush, dear!" said Isabelle, placing her finger on Agatha's arm; "you don't understand me. You were —"

"Isabelle," replied Agatha, turning away hastily,

"unless this subject is dropped, I must, I will refuse to listen."

Isabelle laughed a faint, hollow laugh, like the knocking on a coffin-lid.

"Agatha, child, don't be so hasty! I wished to tell you that your uncle and I were engaged."

"Impossible!" replied Agatha, in a horror-stricken voice.

"It is true, nevertheless," said Isabelle. "We were to have been married after Easter, and I was to prepare Maple Cliff, and send for you home. A pleasant surprise, you know, darling?"

Agatha could not reply; she sunk down on the floor, and hid her face in her hands.

The subject was never mentioned to her again; she always checked the introduction of it in a summary way.

CHAPTER XLII.

RETURN TO MAPLE CLIFF.

“Happy thou art not,
For what thou hast not, still thou strivest to get,
And what thou hast forget’st.

Friend hast thou none.
Thou hast nor youth nor age,
But as it were an after-dinner’s sleep.”

SHAKESPEARE.

“Let me deem that
Some unknown influence, some sweet oracle,
Communicates between us, though unseen,
In absence, and attracts us to each other.”

A GATHA’S EASE and self-possession, which had matured with the rest of her character, were of great service in her present position. She wrote at once, consulting only General Winchester, to Honora, requesting her, with the freedom of a friend, to have Maple Cliff put in readiness for the reception of her uncle ; physicians ordered change of air.

Honora and Gregory (who was at home for the Easter holidays) read the letter together, Gregory looking into her beaming eyes as he closed, and saying, "Our own Agatha still; God be praised!" A new life was infused into the household by the intelligence. Papsy's sorrowful face betokened a shade of pleasure, and she was foremost in making ready rooms for her "little missus." It was her first entrance into Maple Cliff, since she had been so cruelly driven from there; and no persuasions of her best friends could induce her to stay there alone after dark. The remains of early superstitions hung about her heart, and Heaven's light alone could dissipate them.

Duncan Winchester now more than ever desired to make Agatha his wife. He did love her, with the love of a proud, selfish heart, and had imagined, because her haughty mood had given way before his devotion, that she was not indifferent to him. Nevertheless, so proper and dignified was she, and so constantly occupied with her uncle, that no opportunity offered of renewing his addresses during her stay in New York.

"Sister," said Clarendon, the morning Mr. Douglass

was expected, "will you go to the cars with me, to meet Agatha? They come back to Maple Cliff; the non-intercourse system must necessarily fall to the ground."

"Certainly," replied Honora. "Enfeebled as Mr. Douglass is, mind and body, Agatha will need friends more than ever. Poor man! what a life he has led! But do you believe this story of an engagement between him and Isabelle?"

"I had it direct from Dudley," replied Gregory. "I hope Agatha may never know it. It may be the means of bringing the Winchesters to Rockridge, which will not be very desirable."

"Isabelle would not come under the circumstances," said Honora.

"O sister!" he replied, "you still have faith in that woman. She would not scruple at anything to carry out her plans."

The journey fatigued Mr. Douglass, and it was many days before Agatha could leave his room, except at long intervals. Her friends were all devotion and kindness. Gregory called daily, during the remainder of his vacation, asked after her studies, and

expressed his sympathy for her, in the same gentle, manly way she remembered when she came a stranger to Maple Cliff. He returned to New York, for his last term at the Seminary, with a light heart. The one whose absence he had mourned was restored to him, — no longer a child, but a woman, with the same childlike confidence and trust in his word. And yet she did not come and rest her head on his shoulder, as she used to. He could hardly decide in his own mind whether he wished she would.

As the spring advanced, the mind of Mr. Douglass grew brighter; but from his memory had faded all the events that had transpired since his return from Scotland. He inquired for his nephew, and when Chauncey came to his room, he called up a deep blush, and haughty curl of the lip, by asking him, "If it was true, as Tom Ridgway had said, that Miss Morgan and he were to be married soon." Agatha explained to him, that Charlotte was now Mrs. Clement; but of Mr. Clement he had no recollection.

One sunny afternoon in July, the chair of Mr. Douglass had been wheeled, for the first time, into the library, which opened, with its low windows, to

the east. Poor wreck of manhood! his ghastly features distorted by disease, and his gaunt figure bent with infirmities. Agatha watched by her uncle, her heart gladdened with the presence of her dear Honora, who had come to say that she expected her brother in the evening train.

With returning consciousness had revived her uncle's old habit of domineering, and his niece was rarely permitted to be long out of sight.

"Agatha, child!" he said, in a sharp tone, as Honora went out, "bring me the papers, the papers."

"What papers, uncle?" was the reply.

"*Her* papers! *her* papers!" said the old man, nervously clutching her arm. "*Her* papers, *her* desk, — go get it child!"

Agatha waited a moment meditating if she understood aright, and then tripped up stairs, calling to a servant to remain with her uncle. She felt a little timid as she turned the key of the room that had been so long desolate. Everything was as Mrs. Douglass had left it, even to a morning wrapper that hung on a chair by the bedside. It was like entering a tomb. Agatha hurriedly took the writing-desk from

the table; it was unlocked, and as she lifted it, a letter fell from between the lids. She started back as if she had seen the pale, meagre face of her dead aunt, when she stooped to raise the letter. It was directed to Miss Agatha Douglass. Collecting her thoughts as well as she could, she put the strange epistle into her pocket, and hastened to her uncle with the desk.

"Let it alone, child; let it alone," he said, as he tried to snatch it from her; but his trembling hands refused their office, and it dropped into a chair by his side.

"Read the headings of these papers!" he said, sinking back exhausted, as he handed her a bundle from the desk.

Agatha read: "Certificates of Stock in Bank of Montreal;—Deed of House-Lot on King Street;—House-Lot on Duchess Street;—Wood-Lot in District of Montreal;—Mortgage on Estate in Quebec;—Will of Robert Ferguson" ——

"That's it! That's it!" gasped the old man, eagerly. "Give it to me, give it to me, I say!"

Although untrained in deception, her knowledge of her uncle's character, and the name on the will, made

Agatha hesitate; something held her back, and she put another paper into his hand. With a low chuckle of delight, he tore it into many pieces.

"Now let them prove it if they can!" he said, as he pushed the desk from him. "Put it up, Agatha; the rest are nothing but diaries and journals of a life that had better never have been."

The young girl dropped a tear to the memory of the broken heart whose records she now held in her hand, and, putting by the desk, placed the will of Robert Ferguson with the strange letter.

"Now the money and land will all be yours, duck," said the old man, with a silly laugh. "It is all in my name now. Every dollar of it shall be yours. These strange people might turn up relations. That would be inconvenient."

Agatha had been broken of her rest for several nights; nevertheless, when, after satisfying all the demands of her uncle, she retired to her room about midnight, it was not to sleep. The letter and will claimed her attention. The first was written while her uncle was in Scotland, not long before the death of her aunt, and it was signed "Ermina Douglass." It

called upon Agatha, as heir of her uncle's property, to get possession of the will of Robert Ferguson in the desk, wherein she would find who had claims on the property besides herself. Then followed a detailed account of her brother, Frank Ferguson, his marriage to an English girl, by name Catherine Walton. Last of all, the letter urged upon Agatha the claims of Papsy, saying, in mysterious language, that she had a right due from Mr. Douglass at least for a home.

- When Agatha had finished the letter, she read the will. After the usual formula, it gave the bulk of Robert Ferguson's property to his widow, and, at her decease, to his daughter, Ermina Ferguson. There was a codicil, dated some three years after the will, which gave five thousand pounds to his son, Frank Ferguson, married to Catherine Walton, and living in Shropshire, England.

Agatha closed the papers with new and strange thoughts. The Fergusons were her relatives, and the property that was theirs, but for the finding of this paper, would have passed into her hands. She thanked God, who had kept her from defrauding the poor.

She felt that she ought to act at once, and yet she

knew that all must be done judiciously, coolly. Wholly unacquainted with business, she looked around for some one to consult. Her early friend and adviser at once came to her thoughts, and a blush dyed her neck and arms; and then she chided herself for blushing, questioning with herself what he was to her, except like a very dear brother. Her dreams, when at last she fell asleep, were of a compound of wills, letters, and deeds, scattered over the library floor, and she was to arrange them. In the midst of the confusion, a low voice whispered, "Can I help you, Agatha?" She turned, and Gregory's bright smile met hers. She awoke with a start; the maid was by her side trembling violently; her uncle was seized again with apoplexy. Without a moment's hesitation she despatched one servant for the physician, and another for Honora; she could not bear the dreadful sight before her without a friend.

But a few moments elapsed before steps were heard in the hall and the tread of a man on the stairway. Honora entered with her brother, who had returned from New York too late in the evening for a call at Maple Cliff. He raised the sick man from the very

low position in which he had fallen, and anxiously watched, with his finger on the pulse, while Doctor Woodbury took blood from the arm. The excitement and fatigue of the spring and summer had worn upon Agatha, and, as she stood silently noting the black drops, as they fell from the vein, her head swam,—she had just strength to say, “I am faint.” Gregory carried her into the hall, and Honora stood over her, bathing her forehead and hands till she revived.

“You are worn with watching, Agatha,” said Gregory, as she strove to rise. “Lie still, dear child, till you are stronger; there are plenty of persons in the sick-room.”

Agatha rested her head on a couch in the oriel window. The lamps that lighted the hall cast but a faint gleam into the recess. Honora was called into the chamber, and Agatha strove again to rise; but she was still faint, and obliged to rest her head against the window for support.

“My dear Agatha,” said Gregory earnestly, “do you wish me to leave you, or may we be to each other what we were when you left Maple Cliff?”

“Dear Cousin Gregory,” she replied, bursting into

tears, "if I could be 'little Aggie' as I was then, I should be so happy. Home does not seem home without it."

"It shall be so again, Agatha," he said, taking her hand in his. "There shall be no barrier of reserve between us. You shall talk to me as you did when you were just up to my elbow. But first we must break up this watching and confinement. I am surprised that you have endured it so long. Don't you think," he added to Honora, who came out at that moment, "that Papsy might come over now and relieve Agatha of a part of this care?"

Honora assented warmly to her brother's remark, and then informed them that the doctor thought Mr. Douglass might be restored to feeble consciousness, but would probably never leave his chamber.

Agatha had feared the effect of Papsy's presence on her uncle; but the mind was too far sunk into oblivion to recall the past, and, knowing as the girl did all Mr. Douglass's ways, and the ways and means of the household, Agatha was relieved in a measure of her life of servitude.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A VISIT TO OAK BAY.

“O, woman is a tender tree!
The hand must gentle be that rears
Through storm and sunshine patiently
That plant of grace, of smiles and tears.
Let her that waters at the font
Life's earliest blossoms have the care,
And where the garden's Lord is wont
To walk His round,—O, keep her there!”

A. C. COXE.

“I HAVE COME to take you by force of arms,”
said Gregory, smiling, as Agatha ran down from
her uncle's chamber to meet his sister and himself.
“Honora is here to sit with Mr. Douglass, while you
go to ride with me, as a matter of duty.”

He took the road to the chapel in the Gorge, which
Agatha had never seen. It was a little gem in its
way, that *Châpel* of St. Mary. The front porch with
its bell-gable, surmounted by the precious emblem of

our faith, was visible from every part of the valley; while the tall monarchs of the forest, in their pristine beauty and grandeur, spread their arms over the roof, and shadowed the enclosed burial-yard.

Within, all was plain, neat, and appropriate, designed mainly for the poor, but furnished with everything a true worshipper would need.

"I would like to worship here," said Agatha, in a low tone, as she stood by the chancel-rail.

"Would you?" replied Gregory, with evident pleasure. "I am glad you like it. Do you know, Agatha, it was one of my boyhood's dreams, and has been the desire of my manhood, to break the bread of life to these poor people, whom I have known always."

"A very pleasant vision," replied Agatha, — and then followed a long pause.

"Cousin Gregory," she said at length, looking into his face with that full confidence that had always marked their intercourse, "do you think Mr. Clement would be willing I should come here to be baptized?"

"I see no reason why he should not willingly, nay, gladly receive you here," replied the young man, taking both her hands. "And you *will* come?"

"I *will*," she said gently.

They knelt in silence at the chancel-rail, one preparing for an entrance into Holy Orders, the other seeking Holy Baptism.

"There is one ride I would like to take before that time," said Agatha, as they stepped into the chaise at the chapel gate.

"To Oak Bay," replied Clarendon, as if reading her thoughts. "There is ample time now," he added, looking at his watch, "and we have the day before us."

It was a clear July day, reminding Agatha strongly of a day four years before, when she came first under Clarendon's guidance. He thought of that time also, and of the many changes those four years had brought. He longed to make known to Agatha the depth and extent of his affection for her. He feared she regarded him only as a brother, he was quite sure she had never thought of him in a nearer relation; and yet he would not make his confession *now*, while she was contemplating, and ought to have continually before her, an entrance into a higher life. Such a declaration could not but disturb her thoughts; therefore he forbade himself to improve this favorable opportunity.

As they came round the bend of the bay, by her request he stopped the horse, while they walked along the shore. Agatha stepped thoughtfully, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking far out over the waters.

"Gregory," she said, turning eagerly towards him, as they came where a boat was moored, "could you row me to the *very spot*?" Her face was pale, and her eyes larger than ever, as she spoke.

"Yes, Agatha, if you wish it," he replied. "But you are agitated already; I am afraid a nearer view would quite overcome you."

He spoke low, and his voice trembled, but the old *will* was there, and she stepped firmly into the boat, he following in silence.

It was a long and silent row; and when Clarendon rested on the oars, she knew by *his* compressed lip that they were very near the scene of the accident. She leaned over the side of the vessel, and gazed down into those deep, blue waters, that had so nearly been her grave. When the waves had closed over her head, she had made a vow that she was now prepared to ratify before the world, and she wished to

grave that spot upon her memory as with the point of a diamond.

She remained thus lost in thought, till Gregory raised her, saying, "My dear Agatha, I can bear this no longer."

"You saved my life!" she said, slowly and earnestly.

Powerful was the temptation then and there to tell her the love that nerved his arm in that dreadful moment; to paint the feelings with which he watched the slow return to consciousness; how he had curbed his will during her long exile from home and friends. It was a struggle that caused him to turn away his face, and work rapidly and in silence at the oars. He spoke not till the boat was moored at the landing, when, lifting her in his arms to the shore, he whispered, "Forgive me, dear, if I was rude just now; I cannot speak or think calmly of that hour of agony."

His hand trembled as he held hers, and a glimpse of the truth came darting into her soul, like the first sunbeam into the bosom of the unfolding rosebud.

True to her womanly nature, she sought to conceal the light she had gained, and commenced, much to the

astonishment of Gregory, talking zealously on indifferent subjects, as they rode rapidly to the bridge that would carry them over to Chauncey's farm-house. The ruse succeeded, and before many minutes they were chatting cheerfully, as if they had never been overcome with deep emotion.

"Is it possible that is the old house I used to call the salt-box?" she exclaimed, as they approached the farm-house.

"The same still," replied Gregory laughing. "Paint and carpenters' work have made it habitable, and that low stoop in front, and long piazza toward the water, give it a look quite *ornée*. They say," he added, looking into Agatha's flushed face, "that Chauncey tires of his bachelor's life!"

"I knew," she said, clapping her hands and laughing, "that these improvements were not his. Some woman's hand! Look, how neat the door-yard! But who is it, pray? Anybody in Rockridge?"

"I leave you to guess, little chatterbox," replied Gregory.

"Let me see!" she said, putting her hand to her head, with mock gravity. "I don't know a girl in Rockridge Chauncey would marry!"

"Don't be sure, Aggie; you have not mentioned your dear Stella."

"Stella!" she replied hastily; "O, she could n't marry Chauncey!"

"Why not?" said Gregory, enjoying her confusion.

"O, because — because — I must not tell you, but she could not."

"Some little girl's fancy, ah?" said he. "You are remarkably stupid not to have thought of Catherine."

"Catherine Ferguson!" exclaimed she. "I never thought of her marrying."

"You forget you once recommended her to me," replied Gregory; then adding more soberly, "But it is really true; Chauncey is engaged to Catherine. They would have been married in Spring, only she could not leave Robert in his low state."

"And Chauncey never told me," she said, a little displeased.

"They preferred keeping their plans to themselves," he replied. "I heard of it accidentally, and tell you because you have a right to know. Chauncey is proud, and exceedingly sensitive, and the Fergusons are very poor; and though Chauncey loves Catherine, he feels

deeply the truth that the family were brought here from the dregs of society. What a hinderance to one's comfort is pride !”

He looked at his companion as he spoke ; she leaned wearily against the side of the carriage.

“ You are fatigued,” he said, hastily.

“ No,” she replied, laying her hand on his arm, as he reined in his horse ; “ not faint, not wearied, but *troubled*. I have something on my mind that I can bear no longer ; it relates to the Fergusons.”

She gave him the will of Robert Ferguson, and the letter of her aunt, which she had carried about with her, wishing, yet not daring, to speak of their contents. “ Read these,” she added, “ and tell me what ought to be done ? ”

They had reached the door of the farm-house ; the Judge hobbled out to meet them.

“ Ah, Judge,” said Gregory, jumping from the chaise, and lifting his companion after him, “ how 's ‘ *these rhumatiz* ’ ? ”

“ Much after the old sort, — goin' and comin',” replied the old man, opening the door into a cool parlor, comfortably furnished. “ I specs you can jist take care

of yoursels, for Mr. Chauncey has gone down to mill, and won't be back these three hours. I declare," he added, as Agatha walked across the room, to raise the curtain, "how that little mite of a gal has growd to be the prettiest sort! And I guess I beant the only one as thinks so; at any rate, I knows one as agrees with me," he added, shuffling out of the room, carefully closing the door after him.

"Why not look at these papers now?" said Gregory, drawing a little table near the sofa, and putting out his hand for Agatha to sit by him. She took her seat, and gave a detailed account of the way in which the papers came into her possession.

Gregory did not speak till he had carefully read the papers, and listened to the recital. Then he brought his hand forcibly down upon the table, and said, in a very decided tone, "Indeed, something should be done, and somebody must know more of this business. I am afraid there may be truth in the report that Tom Ridgway was not perfectly upright in the settlement of the Scottish estate. Probably there was very little effort to discover the lost son and brother. You were with your aunt when she died, Agatha?"

“No, Gregory, Miss Morgan — Mrs. Clement I mean — was with her.”

“I must see *her*, then, he replied, “and talk with Mr. Ferguson, before I proceed to the law. Agatha,” he added earnestly, “this will make you less rich, but far more happy. I rejoice in the native strength of character that led you to see the *right*, and act upon it so understandingly. I cannot but be thankful, too, that we may be the honored instruments whereby so worthy a family shall be restored to their rightful inheritance.”

CHAPTER XLIV.

UNWELCOME VISITORS.

“Curse the tongue

Whence slanderous rumor, like the adder's drop,

Distils her venom, withering friendship's faith,

Turning love's favor.”

HILLHOUSE.

ON HER return to Maple Cliff from Oak Bay, Agatha found on the table the cards of Miss Winchester and the brothers. Her feelings had been excited by the events of the morning, more than all by the discovery she had made of the secret of her heart; therefore it came that, when she saw the cards, she gave way to what young girls call “a good cry.” She was still in tears, when Honora came down from the sick-room. Agatha pointed to the cards.

“How *shall* I act?” she said, putting her arms about Honora's neck.

“As a Christian lady,” whispered Honora.

"Honora, dear," said Agatha, after a pause, "do you think I should invite them to come here?"

"I do not see any necessity for that. Indeed, in the present state of things here, I think they would prefer the hotel. Perhaps my father may wish to invite them to Woodland."

Miss Clarendon, ignorant of the unwomanly conduct of Miss Winchester towards her brother, inquired of her father, in Gregory's presence, whether he wished to invite the Winchesters to partake of the hospitalities of their cottage. She observed at once a change in her brother's countenance,—the dark look that came but seldom, and argued a depth of feeling, she did not care to arouse. Colonel Clarendon was on the point of walking out, and simply said, "As you please, my daughter."

"What troubles you, brother?" said Honora, coming near him. "Is anything amiss?"

His look into her calm face was like a flash of lightning.

"If Isabelle Winchester comes here, I must leave!" he said, in a severe tone. "However, if you wish it, that is an easy matter."

He had rarely spoken in this way to his sister. He was vexed that the Winchesters had come, thus unbidden, where they were not wanted; and not a little annoyed, that Honora had forgotten all the tricks and arts of Isabelle on her former visit, though he well knew that her crowning act of boldness was a secret in his own bosom.

"Forgive me, sister," he said, after a pause, as he looked at Honora's sad face; "I was hasty. You do not know all, or you would not perhaps wonder —"

"I wonder at nothing," she replied, in a low, sorrowful voice, "but that my brother should suffer his temper to get the better of his reason."

"Honora," said Gregory, rising, "you do not know Isabelle Winchester. She is an artful, designing woman, more unprincipled than you, with your pure, truthful nature, can conceive; and I feel that her coming here now, after what has passed, would compromise my reputation as a man, to say nothing of my name as one who has in view the sacred ministry. I did wrong to speak to you hastily. The rash temper which my mother gave me made me forget myself. Forgive me, sister."

The kiss of forgiveness was sealed, and Honora went out, not knowing exactly what to do, but certain that neither sense of obligation, nor any other motive, must make Isabelle a guest at Woodland Bluff.

No rules of etiquette bound Miss Winchester where her will was concerned, and next morning, before Agatha had exchanged her wrapper for a proper dress, she came running in quite unceremoniously. She was all day at Maple Cliff, and Gregory, in his usual afternoon call, found not only herself, but her brothers, with Agatha. He greeted them with cold politeness, and went away without once changing his grave looks.

He overtook Dudley Winchester at night, as he strolled down to see his friend Robert. They came together at the first landing, when Clarendon paused, and, looking the young man in the face, he said, "Excuse me, Dudley, for the liberty; but I feel constrained to ask, do you seek to be to Stella Ferguson more than a common acquaintance?"

Dudley replied, in a manly tone, "I would not bear that question from any other man, Clarendon, but I know you are friendly to both of us. I have never forgotten Stella."

Gregory did not move; he marked figures with his cane upon the sandy beach. At length he spoke very gravely: "The Fergusons are very poor, Dudley, but honest and well educated. I cannot see why the daughters should not be sought by any gentleman; but your father might think differently."

"I am free to make my own choice," replied the young man, "and Stella shall be my wife, if I can gain her consent."

"Good success to you," said Gregory, taking up the oars; "I like your spirit, and admire your choice. I only wished to be assured of the honesty of your purpose."

"You do not know Stella," replied Dudley, a little haughtily, "or you would not have said that."

* * * * *

"So, my brother! you have really offered your hand in lawful marriage to this girl,—this Stella!"

The tones were those of Isabelle Winchester,—bitter sarcasm, mingled with careless indifference. She sat at the window of her private parlor, in the only hotel of which Rockridge could boast. The windows overlooked the road leading direct to Woodland Bluff and Maple

Cliff. The entrance avenues of both estates were in full view to Isabelle, as she sat lazily cutting the leaves of a new French novel. Dudley did not reply to her speech. Just then he cared very little for all the world save one.

"Do you know what you've done?" continued his sister, turning round angrily towards him.

"Who was her father? Who was her mother?
Had she a sister? or had she a brother?"

"Isabelle," said Dudley, more calmly than might have been expected, "let Stella's parentage be what it may, I seek not to marry her parents or relatives."

"Affectingly romantic!" replied Isabelle; "but I doubt if my aristocratic father will be willing to give his name to one whom Gregory Clarendon picked out of the streets of New York, and who has been linked in the public papers with a notorious blackleg."

"Isabelle, you are malicious as the —"

He did not stay to finish his complimentary speech, but rushed out, pale with rage. On the stairs he met Duncan, but he drew his hat over his eyes, and passed on without a word.

"What have you done to Dudley?" said the brother to Isabelle.

"O, nothing," she replied, carelessly; "only asking after his lady-love. He has really shown himself a man before you, Duncan. Faint heart never wins."

"No, not faint heart, sister," he replied, "but an impenetrable barrier of reserve. Agatha is more distant than ever; and I begin to think Clarendon has secured the prize by a system of privateering."

"Gregory Clarendon!" said Isabelle, flushing crimson. "Never! He shall never marry Agatha Douglass!"

"How unfortunate this illness of Mr. Douglass proves for both of us!" said the brother, with a sigh.

The color grew deeper on Isabelle's face, then faded away in a sallow paleness, as she said, bitterly, "Yes, unfortunate that I cannot victimize myself to carry out my plans! What do you suppose, Duncan, was my motive in engaging to marry this miserable old man?"

"Riches?" said Duncan.

"Poh! try again! That is too commonplace."

"An old man's darling," suggested he.

"Darling!" she said, bitterly; "I am not that fool! I wished to be near Gregory Clarendon, — to make him feel my influence, — to force him to acknowledge

my power, — to give you Agatha, to — Is there nothing we can do,” she added, in a low, revengeful tone, — “nothing we can do to thwart them?”

The young man leaned his head thoughtfully on his hands. Then passed through his mind plans, of which a few were simply ridiculous, and others fearfully wicked. Isabelle too gave herself up to plotting and replotting, till her busy brain grew faint, and her heart sick. Thus this worldly pair spent the hours as they went by, in contemplating the manner in which they would accomplish their own objects, and gain their own ends, forgetting that “man appoints, but God dis-appoints.”

CHAPTER XLV.

GREGORY'S STORY.

"Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in thy presence will avail to make!
We kneel, how weak! we rise, how full of power!
Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others,—that we are not always strong,—
That we are ever overborne with care,—
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled,—when with us is prayer,
And joy, and strength and courage are with *Thee?*"

TRENCH.

"I will cling
To the fixed hope that there will come a time
When we can meet unfettered, and be blest
With the full happiness of certain love."

PERCIVAL.

MR. CLEMENT had received Agatha's desire for baptism joyfully, led her through the maze that had been cast over her spiritual vision at St. Anne's, and appointed an early day for that event, so long looked forward to with trembling fear. At the quiet hour of sunset she stood at the chapel font, waiting

for those solemn words, and that sign and seal, that were to convey to her such great blessings. Why she had come to this lowly chapel to receive this sacrament, those whom she loved best had not asked.

But how was Isabelle employed during this solemn hour. She had watched the departure of each group; and, as Papsy, who had gone to be present soul and body with her "little missis," disappeared down the Gorge, Miss Winchester quietly passed over to Maple Cliff, and proceeded unmolested to the chamber of Mr. Douglass. He was more rational than he had been for some weeks; he welcomed her with a silly laugh, and with the familiarity of a lover. She could hardly hide her disgust; but she had an end to gain.

After many attempts to speak to him of Agatha and Clarendon, she succeeded in making him understand that Gregory sought only the *heiress*; that he was looking forward to the time when he should be sole proprietor of Maple Cliff. Desperate she was, or she would not have dared to play such a game with a dying man.

Agatha, on her return from church, found her uncle, whom she had left quiet, raging like a caged lion.

He denounced her in the most awful terms; took her savagely by the arm; and, grinning with his ghastly lips, cursed Gregory Clarendon with frightful curses, and called down eternal maledictions on her head if she listened to his addresses. He commanded her to send at once for Ridgway, that he might alter his will, and cut her off with nothing, unless she would take an oath that she would never marry Gregory Clarendon. As she went, pale and trembling, to execute this command, Isabelle followed.

"What can have come over Mr. Douglass?" she said, trying to put her arm about Agatha's neck. "I never saw him so furious."

Agatha drew back and looked at Isabelle without speaking.

"I would n't send for Ridgway," added her tormentor, coaxingly; "your uncle will get over it in a few moments."

"Miss Winchester!" said Agatha, curbing the indignation that was burning in her bosom, "I am mistress here at present!"

Ridgway was out of town, and Agatha despatched a special messenger for the Doctor. Isabelle talked pri-

vately with the physician, and thought he should urge Agatha to make the promise her uncle required; it would quiet him, and of course, under the circumstances, would not be binding. Agatha said plainly, that he must forbid Miss Winchester's attendance in her uncle's room. The dapper little man was much puzzled. He looked at the matter scientifically, entertained the ladies with a long dissertation on disease as it was, and as it is, ending in general directions about quiet, &c., &c., and soothed the old man with a soporific.

When all was still, the Winchesters gone, and the household at rest, Agatha stole down to the library sofa, and gave vent to her feelings in bitter weeping. Papsy came softly in, and kneeled at her mistress's feet.

"Little missis, commit thy way unto the Lord. He shall deliver thee from the snare of the hunter."

"We will never both leave him again," said Agatha, sadly. "Do you think he will remember those awful curses when he wakes?" she added, putting her hands to her ears as if the sound still lingered there.

"Curses, like chickens, go home to roost," replied Papsy.

"What can Isabelle Winchester want?" said Agatha, after she had become somewhat composed. "What can be her object in making such disturbance?"

"Wants to marry Mr. Gregory herself," replied the girl.

"But Papsy, Mr. Clarendon does not care for her," said Agatha, a deep blush overspreading her features. "It cannot be!" she added, eagerly. "How could she engage herself to my uncle, if she loves Gregory Clarendon?"

"Little missis don't know much about wicked folks,—wicked women, wicked men," she whispered, with emotion, her thoughts evidently going back to her own sad history.

"O what a dreadful world!" said Agatha, with a sigh.

"But the good Lord has overcome it for us!" replied Papsy, reverentially.

The next morning Mr. Douglass awoke strangely oblivious to all late occurrences. Mr. Clement had come in, as he did daily, for prayers. Agatha sat by her uncle, and Papsy stood at the foot of the bed. Suddenly Mr. Douglass seized the arm of his niece,

and, looking her fiercely in the face, said to her in the tone that had so often chilled the life-blood of the departed: "I tell you again — yes, yes — the mixed races," he added, with a savage laugh. "I shall fetch her here for you to bring up: the boy Chet may look out for himself, but Papsy I must take, or she will go on the town." His voice had risen and his grasp had become so powerful, as he proceeded, that Mr. Clement was obliged to interfere, and take Agatha from him. Papsy kept her position, like a bronze statue; but with earnest gaze she drank in every word. Slowly the truth dawned on Agatha's mind, — the mystery of Papsy's life was explained.

As the clergyman went through the shrubbery, he met Gregory, on his way to the house.

"Clarendon," he said, "it is dreadful that Agatha should be subjected to hearing the details of such a life as Mr. Douglass has led." He then recounted the scene of the morning.

"I am almost wicked enough to wish death would put an end to it," said Gregory. "I am going now to take Agatha for a walk. She will lose her health if this anxiety and confinement continue much longer."

The first glance told the sufferings of the past night and the present day.

"Agatha, my precious one, how you are troubled!" said Gregory, drawing her towards him. "Do you feel equal to a walk over the hill?"

They took the way above Maple Cliff, over the high bluff beyond. It had ever been a favorite ramble with Agatha, in the days when she and Papsy ran wild together. On the very summit of the hill was a clear, glassy lake, shut in by a grove of pines, except on the side towards Mr. Douglass's dwelling. From there, the eminence overlooked the estates of Mr. Douglass and Colonel Clarendon, and the village and valley beyond. It was a difficult ascent, and had never been made easier, because the proprietor did not wish it to be accessible. It belonged to Mr. Douglass's farm, and the fountains about his grounds were supplied by the crystal waters found there. Agatha, worn by excitement, could not trip over the rocky pathway, as she had done in bygone days. She was entirely out of breath, and glad to reach a rude kind of seat which her brother had prepared for her in her earlier rambles. The day was clear and bright, the opening day of

Autumn. The first flush of autumnal beauty had tinted the maples about the family dwelling; all else wore the greenness of Spring. The waters of the river, far below, made a silver line of light among the green fields and bare, rugged rocks, and dancing leaves dimpled the surface of the little lake.

Clarendon sat down by Agatha, and, gently laying her head on his shoulder, bade her listen to a story. She innocently obeyed; but only a few choice sentences had been spoken, before she dropped her eyelids and strove to hide her burning blushes. The story was well told, and the speaker waited a reply; but it did not come.

"Will you not tell me, Agatha," he said earnestly,—
"will you not tell me if my love is returned,—if you will be mine?"

Courage came back to her, when she heard how the shadow of a doubt made his voice tremulous, and looking up confidingly, placing her hand in his, she whispered, "Gregory, I will never be another's, but — but," she continued, hesitatingly, "you must hear my story now; and I have such faith in your teachings that I know you will help me look only at the *right*."

She then recounted to him the history of the last evening, repeating with lips that paled at the remembrance, the awful curses of her uncle, if she listened to his love. The part that Isabelle had acted could not be concealed, though Agatha strove to leave her uncondemned. When she spoke of Isabelle and her doings, he frowned and bit his lip.

"Would you rather not hear?" she inquired.

"Go on," he said, while a flash of anger kindled his dark eye. "I am indignant that one so good and pure should come in contact with such fiendish wickedness as dwells in the heart of Isabelle Winchester.—Please go on, dearest," he added, soothingly, "I am impatient."

"Indeed," she replied, "I have finished my story. I only wish you to tell me if—if I can give you the promise you ask, and which," she added, blushing, "I would willingly give, without practical disobedience to my uncle's authority!"

There was a pause,—an evident struggle.

"We may safely wait," said Gregory, when he could command himself. "No vows or protestations can make us more truly one. I will ask no promise from you till I claim you at the hand of God's minister as my

wife. Till then be to me the same simple, warm-hearted girl you were when I bore you in my arms from a watery grave, and I shall be satisfied."

She again placed her hand confidently in his, telling him, as she had always told him, the inmost thoughts of her heart.

To her were confided Gregory's plans for future usefulness. To her love and confidence were given thoughts — treasured thoughts — that had never sought the light of human sympathy. It was hardly noonday when they left Maple Cliff, but the evening mists enveloped the landscape before they retraced their steps. Gregory did not even confide his joy to Honora. Like a miser, he treasured each look, and word, and the touch of that gentle hand that held his destiny.

CHAPTER XLVI.

MERITED WRATH.

"What profits us, that we from Heaven derive
A soul immortal, and with looks erect
Survey the stars, if, like the brutal kind,
We follow where our passions lead the way."

"God hath two families of love,
In earth below and heaven above;
One is in battle sharp and sore,
And one is happy evermore."

THE BUSINESS affairs relating to the letter and will that Agatha had so providentially discovered engrossed much of Clarendon's time and attention. He had put the matter, at length, into the hand of a lawyer in a neighboring town, having gained necessary information from Mr. Ferguson and Mrs. Clement. About a week after the important event recorded in the close of the last chapter, he was called out of town to attend to this business. They were long days

to Agatha, the days of his absence. Isabelle ceased not to persecute her, coming every morning, and, in her blandest manner, asking for Mr. Douglass; but since the dreadful disturbance she had caused in the sick-room, Papsy kept close watch, and she was never again permitted entrance there. Papsy was unwearied in her attendance, day and night, and when Agatha begged her to take rest, she would say, "No, little missis, Papsy can do it all *now*."

The third day after Gregory's departure, Agatha left Isabelle, who had been all day at Maple Cliff, and walked out to seek rest and refreshment. Rosa's youngest babe had been very ill, and she took the road to the castle, walking leisurely, enjoying the beauties of the foliage, dyed afresh by the rays of a gorgeous sunset. Her heart, that had been ruffled by the ill-omened presence of Isabelle, was calmed. Her call at the castle was hurried by the lateness of the hour; but more, perhaps, by the information that Rosa gave, "that Chet had gone to the cars to fetch Mr. Gregory."

She had passed the first patch of woods on her homeward way, and entered the grove that skirted the

chapel, when she was startled by the figure of a man, leaning against the trunk of a tree. She comforted herself with the probability that it might be Mr. Clement, but a nearer view showed her mistake.

"Good evening, Miss Agatha," said the voice of Duncan Winchester. "Chance has given me the opportunity I have been seeking these two weeks."

He approached, and drew her arm within his.

"I have something to tell you," he continued. "Do you know that I love you with an intensity that defies control, and you will not give me the privilege of a man, and suffer me to throw myself at your feet. You hardly allow me to be civil."

"When you cease to talk of love," said Agatha, haughtily withdrawing her arm, "and confine yourself to proper subjects of conversation, I may listen."

"But you shall listen," he said, taking both her hands in one of his, and tightly grasping her arm with the other. "Gregory Clarendon saved your life, and he demands in return what is dearer to me than life. He is a knave, and —"

"I will not hear it," said Agatha, turning away her face, and uttering a faint cry.

The next instant, Chet, who was on his return home, and had heard from the cliff below the last words of Duncan, and the exclamation that followed, sprung forward, and held the young brute by the collar, unloosing his grasp from the arm of Agatha.

“Coward!” muttered Chet, “you shall not go unpunished;”—and holding Winchester in his powerful grip, he gave the young man a thorough castigation with his own riding-whip. It was the last time Duncan Winchester was seen in Rockridge.

Agatha rested in the chapel porch, endeavoring to compose herself, while Chet stood in a listening attitude.

“He is coming,” said Chet; “I hear his carriage-wheels. Mr. Gregory is coming.”

“I am afraid they may meet,” she said, trying to rise, still trembling with fear.

“He knows nothing of this,” replied Chet; “and if the young rascal insults him, he may possibly get a second edition of what I have given him.”

The wheels came nearer, and Chet went into the road to meet Clarendon. It may be supposed he was somewhat excited when he heard the tale. He sup-

ported Agatha to the carriage, warmly thanking Chet for his opportune interference. He had gone at once to Maple Cliff; but finding Agatha out, had come in pursuit, growing a little anxious as he proceeded without meeting her.

"My darling," he said, as he drove swiftly through the thick grove below the chapel, "you will not venture out without me, while this impertinent young rascal is about. It is fortunate for both of us that we did not meet."

Agatha did not reply when Clarendon inquired the next morning if she had recovered from her fright, but, turning up her loose sleeve from her fair, round arm, she showed the print of fingers in deep purple lines.

"Base coward!" muttered Gregory. "I cannot be too thankful he has left town; I should be tempted to do something, were he here, that I might regret in calmer moments."

"O, it is nothing," replied Agatha. "It will be well in a day or two."

"Nothing! nothing," he said, "that a person calling himself a man should leave the print of brute

force on the delicate arm of a woman! Think of living one's life with such a man! Of being his wife!"

Agatha shuddered as he spoke, remembering that this fate her uncle had sought for her.

"Gregory," she said, after a pause, speaking a little timidly, "I could not sleep, thinking of those blows. Was it quite right for Chet to strike him?"

"My precious, Christian child," he replied earnestly, "you have gone further than I in your heavenward course. Can you forgive this wanton brutality?"

"I don't think he meant to hurt me so much," she said, as if thinking rather than speaking; "only his temper rose beyond his control, because I would not listen to his words; and you know," she added, shading her eyes with her hand, and speaking very low, "I can pity those who have ungoverned tempers."

"You are more charitable, dearest, than I," replied Gregory. "I have reason to think his course was premeditated. He intended to frighten you into listening to his suit."

They were interrupted by Mr. Clement, who came with a summons for them to attend the wedding of Catherine and Chauncey. Robert had failed rapidly for

the last day or two, and was desirous the marriage ceremony should take place before his death.

"May I congratulate *you*, Clarendon?" said the clergyman, as Agatha left the room to prepare herself.

"We hope to call upon you before many weeks to complete our happiness," replied Clarendon, returning the warm pressure of his hand.

They found the bridal party in waiting. Robert, upon his couch in the adjoining room, was within sight and sound of all that passed.

"Don't pray look so mournful," whispered Gregory, as he came and stood by Agatha. "The whole party is more funereal than bridal."

The ceremony proceeded; they had risen from their knees, when Stella, looking towards her brother, uttered a scream. His eyes were fixed and glassy, and the clergyman went from the prayers for the married pair to supplication for the dying. The bridal was indeed changed to a funeral.

The physician's chaise stood at the door when Agatha reached home, and she hurried to her uncle's room. Life was ebbing away, and, as the sun went

down in a mass of dull leaden clouds, the soul of the miserable old man left the earthly tenement.

Robert, by his own request, was laid in the chapel burial-ground, while Mr. Douglass reposed in the old churchyard, by the side of her whose life he had im-bittered. Thus passeth away alike, to the eye of man, the evil and the good: let them rest. It is not for us to lift the veil,—they are in the keeping of a just and merciful Saviour.

Chauncey Douglass proved himself son and brother to the bereaved household, opening his home and heart to the family, thus again leaving the Bird's Nest untenanted.

Mr. Douglass's will was read, after the funeral, by Tom Ridgway, in the presence of the friends. It left his large property, without limitation or legacy of any kind, to his adopted child, "Agatha Douglass." After the reading, Colonel Clarendon rose, and in the name of Miss Douglass stated the relationship existing between her late aunt and Mr. Frank Ferguson, and the claims that gentleman had on the estate, with the wish of the heiress, that all that by right was his should be restored.

There was one who followed among the mourners, in long widow's weeds. But the tears she shed feignedly for the departed, were dropped to the memory of her own unsuccessful machinations. She had been outwitted by the dead, and the homestead of Maple Cliff, which Mr. Douglass at their engagement assured her should be hers, was in the hands of Agatha. She had waited for this triumph, but it was denied her.

CHAPTER XLVII.

FESTIVAL OF ALL SAINTS.

“Who but the Church can every power
Of the true woman nurse to life,
Till, fit for every changeful hour,
Is seen the maiden — woman — wife?

“When the pale mother clasps her child,
And pats her darling to its rest,
Or sinks to slumber undefiled,
Her bride ring shining o’er her breast, —

“Again to hallow that pure joy,
Comes Holy Church, and tells her then
Of Mary and the Holy Boy,
And claims the turtle-doves again.”

A. C. COXE.

THE FIRST day of November proved to be a warm, sunny day for the season. Colonel Clarendon had just read from the last evening’s paper of the sailing of the Eureka from New York for Paris. In the list of passengers were Mr. and Miss Winchester, and servant.

"Father," said Gregory, as he took his hat for his usual morning call at Maple Cliff; "service at the chapel this morning. You will go?"

"Certainly," replied Honora, surprised at the question.

There were present at the holy feast in the Chapel of St. Mary many of the poor wanderers in the Gorge, who had been brought in by the indefatigable labors of Mr. Clement. Papsy took her seat with the bouquet she never failed to bring for little Harry's grave, and Chet and Rosa had come to offer thanks for the restoration of their little one.

The services of All-Saints, always solemn and affecting, were unusually so on that day. It might be the deep feeling manifested in the tones of the rector. His wife was present there for the first time since the birth of her babe, to offer the customary thanksgiving; and he deeply felt the bond that "knit together the elect in one communion and fellowship." The inhabitants of the Oak-Bay farm-house had been drawn thither by the remembrance of a son and brother who had lately joined "the innumerable company which no man can number." The congregation seemed loath

to rise from their kneeling posture, after the benediction; and they were recalled by the voice of God's minister, as he said: "Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God and this company, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony."

Every one rose at the words "Dearly beloved." Gregory and Agatha, with Colonel Clarendon and Honora (who had caught the idea at once), standing at the chancel rail. As the benediction was pronounced, a pair of robins perched on the sill of the chancel window, and sung merrily in the sunshine. To Papsy's imaginative nature, this was an omen of everything pleasant and good for the bridal pair.

Colonel Clarendon was the first to fold Agatha to his heart, and whisper, "My daughter." Gregory and Agatha returned to Woodland Bluff, to dine with their friends, and passed over to Maple Cliff in the afternoon, as if that had always been their home. There was no party, no expensive wedding presents or wedding dresses, but a quiet scene of domestic bliss, the choice of both.

"There," said Mrs. Dobbin, when she heard of it,

“that is just like that girl,—never does anything like other folks. Everybody knew that Clarendon would marry her if he could, with such a heap of money. But deary me! she’s nothing but a child! One of those imprudent early marriages.”

Mrs. Charlotte Clement was much of the same mind, though she did not express it openly. She could not resist telling Honora, that she thought Gregory rather “hasty.” “She could not think of Agatha as a suitable person for a minister’s wife.” Her husband, overhearing the remark, reminded her “that clergymen must be allowed to have different tastes, as well as other men.”

The nine days’ wonder of Clarendon’s sudden marriage was superseded, in the mind of the good people of Rockridge, by the startling intelligence that Eliza Ridgway and Ann Matilda Dobbin had gone, in company with the Romish priest from Ridgeville, into the Convent of the Blessed Virgin, in Canada. A letter was found in Miss Eliza’s room, addressed to nobody, but stating the fact, that this was not a hasty step, but taken after months of deliberation. It would be useless, she said, to look after them. They sought

such a separation from the world as acknowledged no ties of blood or kindred, and, being both of age, parents had no control.

Mr. Clement grieved sorely lest, through his neglect, blindness had happened to one of his flock; but Colonel Clarendon assured him that the desire for notoriety, which from childhood had been a distinguishing characteristic of Miss Eliza, was sufficient to lead one of her shallowness to take the step that had fixed her for life.

“For life?” said Gregory, incredulously. “Who knows but in time we may have the ‘disclosures of Miss Eliza Ridgway,’ bound in a uniform edition with ‘Maria Monk’?”

* * * * *

The third anniversary of Agatha's wedding-day was a quiet, happy day, like their bridal, and yet not like it. A new tenderness had grown up in their hearts; new ties had twined their affections more closely together. On the pale mother's breast rested two little heads, and over them stooped a fond father, who looked at them with wondering love.

“Have you thought of names, darling, for these precious gifts?” he said, fondly.

The faint color came into the mother's cheek, as she replied, "Have you?"

"No, Aggie, I have really been so anxious about you, that these little ones have hardly had their share of their father's attention. But tell me your names; for your sweet, pale face is just as transparent to me as the rosy one I used to read."

Agatha smiled, and then, looking thoughtfully down on her little ones, she said: "Do you think Honora would be pleased if we call them Norman and Honora?"

"She will be delighted; that is, she ought to be," said Gregory, with animation.

"Will you ask her, dear?" she said. "Norman may be too sacred with her for common use."

He assented, and then they talked of their baptism, and of the deep and awful responsibility of their training.

"I could not bear it, but for you to help me," whispered Agatha.

"I am sure I could not think of it without you," he replied, tenderly.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

CHANGES AND CHANCES.

“A chance may win what by mischance was lost;
The net that holds no great takes little fish;
In some things all, in all things none are crossed;
Few all they need, but none have all they wish;
Unmingled joys here to no man befall;
Who least hath some, who most hath never all.”

ROBERT SOUTHWELL.

FROM THE time of Mr. Clarendon's ordination, which took place not long after his marriage, the people of the Gorge were under his pastoral care, Mr. Clement still retaining his position as rector of the old church. Gregory found an efficient helpmeet, in all his efforts for his increasing parish, in his young wife. She entered with her earnest nature into the needs and sorrows of the poor to whom he ministered. Mr. Clarendon was summoned, one cold night in November, to the dying bed of a woman whom Chet had found, in the hut formerly occupied by the Judge,

with a young child in her arms, both nearly dead with cold.

The clergyman observed the hasty movement with which the woman turned her face away when he addressed her, and he recognized, amid the wan and faded features, the lineaments of Julia Ridgway. He spoke to her of the mercy that never faileth, of the rescued Magdalene and the comforted outcast, and led the weary soul to the cross of Christ. He drew from her the sad tale of her life. She had fallen lower and lower after her first disgrace, till, in some haunt of the most vicious, she had met Dick Walbridge. In the days of their comparative innocence he had won her affections, and there lingered around her worn and trampled heart the memory of that early love. They went through the ceremony of marriage before a justice of the peace, and she had followed him faithfully, brutal, degraded as he was, for the last two years, till the hand of justice met him, and Julia had closed his dying eyes in the shelter of a prison. It was in utter despair that the poor woman had sought her home, not for herself, but for the sake of the helpless infant at her breast.

After the funeral of the miserable Julia, Mr. Clarendon recommended the child to the care of its grandmother; but she declined the charge, and the little one was left to the tender mercies of the town.

"Do you notice, dear," said Mrs. Clarendon to her husband, not long after the burial of poor Julia, "how sorely Papsy takes the fate of this wretched woman to heart? Her countenance wears the mournfully distressed look it did after Dick went away, when she would sit for days looking down into the water as if she longed to lie there."

"Yes, I remember," said Clarendon, smiling; "that was when I suffered most on your account. But I will tell you, Agatha," he added, more gravely, "what is her trouble. This child of Richard's she longs to adopt as her own. Her romantic devotion to him is really worthy of a better cause."

"And will she, dear husband?" said his wife, coming towards him, and looking up earnestly into his face.

"She would willingly," he replied, "if I thought it best; and she may as it is, if she can make up her mind to leave you."

"Leave me, Gregory!" she said. "Why need that follow?"

"And would my precious one be willing," he whispered, drawing her towards him, "to have the child of vice,—the child born among the very dregs of humanity, brought up with our little ones?"

"By nature born in sin, even as others," she replied, musingly. "You will not refuse," she said, putting her arms about his neck, and looking imploringly into his face. "The little thing may be such a comfort to poor Papsy."

"But my little pleader," he said, solemnly, "the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children."

"Yes, Gregory," she replied, hesitatingly, "but we can have the little one made a member of Christ, and you can help Papsy to bring her up as she ought. And you know the promises!" she added, looking persuasively into his eyes.

"I cannot resist you, Aggie. Papsy shall have the child, and she shall carry her to baptism with ours."

* * * * *

Ten years have passed over Rockridge,—ten years of change. The inhabitants have multiplied, and busi-

ness has increased rapidly. Five large manufactories have gone up below the Gorge, and already, with their busy wheels and industrious operatives, interrupt the quietude of Oak-Bay farm. But Chauncey Douglass has learned to feel the bond of brotherhood, and does not chafe at the intrusion.

The chapel at the Gorge is filled to overflowing with devout worshippers, and the graveyard has spread its peaceful resting-places abroad among the sheltering forest trees. Chet's castle is unmolested. Time deals kindly with its inmates. Chet retains his dignity as "lord of the Gorge," and his peculiarities; but they are tempered with the spirit of the Gospel. Aunt Polly, helpless and senseless, has been sheltered and fed for years in the home of Chet, and the blessing descends in the docility and obedience of their household. As we come up the Gorge, which retains its wildness, though more thickly settled, we notice the Bird's Nest, where it stands in its shelter of old gnarled apple-trees. But the house is enlarged, and many dwellings have gone up above and below it. Before the low stoop swings a sign, "Valley Hotel, J. Dobbin." Here the Deacon, having met with many reverses of fortune, has estab-

lished himself, or rather his wife, as innkeeper. She has succeeded, since this move, in making a match for one of her girls; but three remain on her hands. Here Elder Sparks, long past meridian, holds forth, with his pristine vehemency, against the "Scarlet Lady"!

In his exhortations to his people to avoid "her daughter and granddaughter," he refers to the example of Eliza Ridgway, who went from the bosom of one to the embrace of the other, forgetting that Eliza was trained under his teachings, and that his own Ann Matilda went and did likewise. The Ridgway family have disappeared from Rockridge. Ridgeville has a new owner and another name.

Tom has parted with the pretty Italian villa, and lives, with his worldly-minded companion, a thoroughly worldly life amid the din of New York. The villa has become the summer residence of Dudley Winchester. The General has turned the affections of his old age around his daughter Stella, and they are inseparable. Isabelle still drinks deep of the draught of pleasure. Worn, haggard, and gray, by the aid of paints and other artificials she is still brilliant in the ball-room. She visits her brother Dudley but seldom;

her heart cannot endure the quiet happiness that pervades that neighborhood. Duncan has sunk in a foreign whirlpool of dissipation, and will probably never live to see again his native land.

Woodland Bluff is more embowered than ever, except one window, on the side toward Maple Cliff. It is the low window of the Colonel's room, and many little feet come running through the shrubbery to see "dear grandpapa." "Aunt Nora" lives her life again in the manly, brown-eyed Norman, and the brilliant, black-eyed Honora.

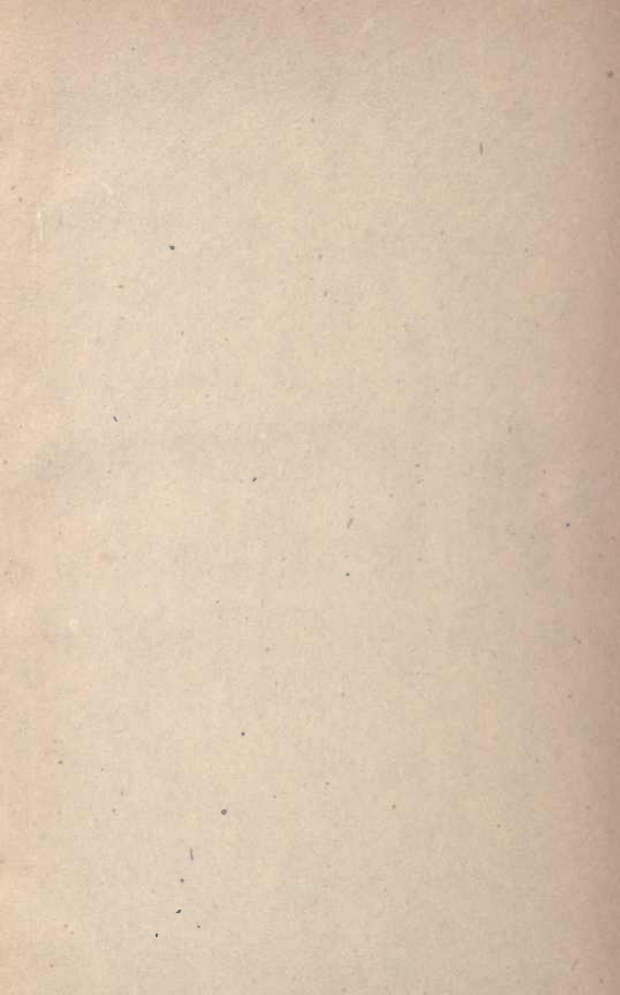
Maple Cliff is the same in externals. The tall maples cast their shadows, and drop their many-colored leaves over the roof; but within we mark changes. The rooms are not as stately and stiff in their appointments as formerly, and the slates and school-books about the library, and the small chairs and toys here and there, speak of the presence of childhood. It is the hour for morning recitations, and the pupils are assembling. First come the twins, always inseparable, and now mingling their curls in a whispered conversation about the celebration of the morrow, their birthday. Close in their steps follows little Miss Agatha,

whom her father designates as "my little Saxon,"—her very fair skin and deep blue eyes justifying the name. After this little creature of five summers walk two persons whom we do not at first recognize; a lady, perhaps of twenty-eight years, leading by the hand a pale, pensive girl of eleven. To bring up the rear come those whom we cannot mistake,—our own Agatha, very lovely in her maturity, and her noble husband. But why is the mother's face pale, and her dress of a sombre hue, a quiet sadness resting on her brow, and reflected in the face of her husband? Why is that band of children so noiseless and hushed in their movements? The tiny cross in the chapel-yard tells the tale: the angels have been there, and carried away their babe, their Stella,—the plaything of the house; and little Agatha often brings tears to the mother's eyes by asking, "When will baby come again?"

This is the school; and the father, like a true patriarch, begins the daily instructions by invoking the blessing of Heaven upon them and their teacher. That fair lady is their teacher. Have we never seen her? We shall surely know the gentle Anne Wal-

bridge. There is still one we do not recognize,—that girl of eleven years, slender and delicate as a reed, with a pensive shadow on her young face, whom Mrs. Clarendon beckons to a seat near her. We must ask her name, although she is well known in Rockridge as “Papsy’s little Mary.”

THE END.



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